

Forty-Second
National Convention
Socialist Labor Party

July 15 – 18, 1995

Minutes, Reports, Resolutions, Etc.



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**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
42ND NATIONAL CONVENTION
SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY**

July 15–18, 1995

Days Inn Hotel
Santa Clara, Calif.

MORNING SESSION, SATURDAY, JULY 15, 1995

National Secretary Robert Bills called the 42nd National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party to order at 9:10 a.m.

Temporary Organization

K. Boettcher was elected temporary chairperson.

C. Camacho was elected temporary recording secretary.

J. Parker was appointed temporary sergeant at arms.

Election of Credentials Committee

S. Fink, J. Barnes and J. McHugh were elected to constitute the Credentials Committee.

At 9:17 a.m., the convention recessed until 9:30 a.m. to allow the committee to do its work. Reconvened at 9:47 a.m.

S. Fink rendered the following report for the Credentials Committee.

Your committee reports the following regular delegates have presented their credentials, and we recommend that they be seated:

Section Sacramento (1): Albert Stokes; Section San Francisco Bay Area (1): Kenneth Boettcher; Section St. Petersburg (1): Mary Brlas, alternate, serving in place of Edward Thiele, who was unable to serve; Section Minneapolis (1): Karl Heck; Section Akron (1): Peter Kapitz; Section Cleveland (1): Robert Burns; Section Portland (1): Sid Fink; Section Seattle (1): Charles Turner; Section Milwaukee (1): Michael Mahoney; National Members-at-Large (6): James Barnes, Bernard Bortnick, Christian Camacho, Jeff Chern,

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Kenneth Kelly and James McHugh.

The following delegates did not have their credentials, but duplicate credentials were available from the national office and your committee recommends that these delegates be seated: Section Cook County (1): Henry Coretz, and Section Philadelphia (1): Luis Figueroa.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] SID FINK, JAMES BARNES, JAMES MCHUGH
Credentials Committee

On motion, the report was accepted.

Election of Agenda Committee

On motion, the committee is to consist of three. On motion, J. Chern, R. Burns and H. Coretz were elected to constitute the committee.

The chair declared a recess at 9:50 a.m. to allow the committee to do its work. Reconvened at 10 a.m.

The committee recommended that the following be adopted as the convention's agenda:

Saturday Morning Session, July 15

1. Permanent Organization
 - a) Election of Chairperson
 - b) Election of Vice Chairperson
 - c) Election of Recording Secretary
—Appt. of Asst. to Recording Secretary
 - d) Appointment of Sergeant at Arms
 - e) Election of Mileage Committee (2)
2. Determination of Attendance Policy
3. Report of Sergeant at Arms
4. Report of the National Secretary (such sections as
can be read)
5. Adjournment to Afternoon Session

Saturday Afternoon Session, July 15

1. Roll Call
2. Report of Sergeant at Arms
3. Report of the National Secretary (completion)
4. Introduction of Resolutions
5. Discussion of Sections of National Secretary's Report
6. Adjournment to Sunday Morning Session

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Sunday Morning Session, July 16

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Reading of Minutes of Previous Sessions
4. Report of Sergeant at Arms
5. Discussion of National Secretary's Report (if necessary)
6. Unfinished Business
7. New Business (including resolutions from delegates)
8. Determination of Committees
9. Referring Matters to Committees
10. Election of Committees
11. Adjournment to Next Session

Order of Business for All Subsequent Sessions

1. Call to Order
2. Election of Chairperson (if necessary)
3. Election of Vice Chairperson (if necessary)
4. Roll Call
5. Report of Sergeant at Arms
6. Reading of Minutes of Previous Day's Sessions (morning session only)
7. Unfinished Business
8. Reports of Committees
9. New Business (last day—only matters that can be given immediate attention)
10. Last Day—Reading of Minutes
11. Adjournment

On motion, the committee's recommendation was concurred in.

Permanent Organization

- K. Boettcher was elected chairperson.
- A. Stokes was elected vice chairperson.
- K. Kelly was elected recording secretary.
- D. Bills was appointed assistant to the recording secretary.
- J. Parker was appointed sergeant at arms.

Election of Mileage Committee

On motion, the committee is to consist of two.

On motion, G. Gunderson and K. Heck were elected to

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constitute the committee.

Determination of Attendance Policy

On motion, this convention will be an open convention.

The sergeant at arms reported seven members present in the audience.

Report of National Secretary

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

National Headquarters

The two years that have passed since the SLP last met in National Convention have been extremely difficult ones for the national headquarters staff and for the Party's membership as a whole. During those two years it was necessary for the staff to adapt to conditions that I described to the convention as "the most threatening of any since 1973, when the Editor of the *Weekly People* walked off the job and left it to his one assistant and the then National Secretary to contend with the problem."

When preparing this report and deciding how I might best put the situation as it exists today into perspective, I reviewed the published proceedings to the 1993 National Convention and the two NEC Sessions held since then. Presumably every delegate to this convention has done something similar, and for that reason it may seem unnecessary to include such a review here. However, before attempting to expand on the present situation, there are certain passages from those reports, and from some of the voluminous correspondence conducted by the NEC following last year's Regular NEC Session, which I believe will serve to sharpen the focus of your own deliberations. At the same time, and before highlighting what has transpired since the 1993 National Convention, I want to give you some indication of what the situation is at present. The most efficient way to do that is to insert the following from a letter that was mailed to all members of the NEC under date of June 29:

To the Members of the NEC
Dear Comrades:

I am writing to inform you of recent developments affecting members of the headquarters staff that are certain to have an adverse effect on the headquarters operation. How serious an effect remains to be seen,

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but the situation being as tenuous as it is any negative development is potentially a disastrous one.

First: Comrade Genevieve Gunderson, the Party's bookkeeper, has been diagnosed with a recurrence of cancer and is scheduled to begin chemotherapy treatments soon.

Comrade Gunderson developed cancer five or six years ago. It was successfully treated then, but it was always known—or at least there was a high expectation—that it would recur. We're all deeply upset and concerned on a personal level, as you may imagine. Chemotherapy affects different people in different ways, as you undoubtedly know. Some people are made very ill by it, and it can have a debilitating effect on them, while others react in ways that allow them to function quite normally.

It would be purposeless to speculate on how Comrade Gunderson will respond to the treatments, but it's important that you be aware of this development. We have no backup for Comrade Gunderson, or anyone else for that matter. Without a steady bookkeeper (if it comes to that) we could be faced with real trouble.

Second: Following the National Convention, it is a virtual certainty that Comrade Kenneth Boettcher will be going over to a part-time work schedule. This will be necessary because of certain developments affecting [his family] * * * I don't feel at liberty to go into detail on this at the moment, in part because I am not fully informed . . . Comrade Boettcher, as you already know, is holding down two full-time jobs, and as the only breadwinner in his household he would not be able to support himself, his wife and his daughter if he were to give up his other job, where his salary is much higher than the Party could possibly pay.

There should be no need to expand on what effect this development will have on *The People*. At a minimum, it almost certainly will mean a sharp decline in the amount of copy that Comrade Boettcher can contribute. Here, too, it would be premature to speculate too much until more is known, although it can be reported that these problems have already eaten into his work-time here.

* * * * *

With the National Convention looming just ahead, and the July 22 issue of *The People* hanging over my head, there won't be much time to carry on the correspondence until after the middle of next month. As always, however, your comments and any suggestions you might have for easing the situation will be sincerely appreciated.

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

With this information now before you, I will proceed with my review of developments since the 1993 National Convention.

The weeks immediately preceding that convention were particularly stressful and tiring ones for a staff that was already being stretched to the limits of their endurance. As I summed up those weeks in my report to the convention:

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There has been no time to think about the future, or what might be done to prevent a disaster in which *The People*, the national office, or both, might collapse. Every moment of our time and every ounce of our energy have been channeled into preparing this report and keeping *The People* alive until the [1993] National Convention could assemble and consider what the priorities should be and how they are to be met.

However, the present headquarters staff has neither the numbers nor the physical endurance to hold things together on the present basis for very long. This convention must either solve the problem by coming up with the additional staff needed to restore stability to the headquarters, or it must devise a plan that the remaining staff can implement.

I also reported that, "The remaining loyal staff has done everything within their power to prevent the worst from happening until this convention could convene and begin its deliberations," and I outlined certain practical measures that had been taken to enable us to continue publishing *The People*. Those measures were summarized in a letter to the NEC and included in my report, as follows:

1. Our objective is to maintain uninterrupted publication through the issue of May 29, 1993. That is, our aim is to get by the National Convention, following which the entire situation will have to be reassessed.

2. Comrade [Kenneth] Boettcher will continue doing what he has been doing all along. That is, he will maintain his copy load and attend to the mechanics of producing the physical product.

3. The National Secretary will continue to contribute reprints, etc. He will also do the editing. However, he will make no effort to write articles until he has completed . . . his report to the National Convention

4. Comrade [Nathan] Karp will contribute as much original copy as possible. Shortfalls will be made up on a contingency basis.

5. Comrade Donna Bills will do whatever typing is required, and attend to such things as making changes in the activities and directory columns, etc.

6. Comrades Gunderson and D. Bills will do all the proofreading (copy, page proofs, etc.)

7. Contributions received from the field will be reviewed and considered as they come in. For the time being, no special effort will be made to increase the number of articles received from that source.

The preceding covers all the essential points * * * It is assumed that unpredictable problems will pop up and that some shuffling will have to be done along the road. These will be dealt with as best we can as they arise.

To this I added that preparations for the issue of May 29, 1993, had begun, but because two members of the staff were under the pressure of other organizational obligations there

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could be no guarantee that the May 29 issue of *The People* would go to press on time. "If any one of the human components in the equation were to falter at this stage due to illness or any other problem over which no control can be exerted, that issue, or any subsequent issue, would be jeopardized." Fortunately, we did manage to get that issue of *The People* to press on time, though barely.

In response to the situation as it existed then, the 1993 National Convention instructed your National Secretary to take whatever measures he felt might be needed to prevent a collapse of the headquarters and any interference with the continued publication of *The People*.

Within two months of the 1993 National Convention it became apparent that certain changes would be needed if *The People* was to continue, and it was decided to pull *The People* back from a biweekly to a semimonthly publishing schedule.

Before long, however, it became evident that this measure alone was insufficient to meet the crisis, and the decision to call the NEC into Special Session was made. The Special Session was held in January 1994, "in response to the crisis that exists at the Party's national headquarters and threatens to cripple its operations, including, but not limited to, the continued publication of the Party's official organ."

In apprising the NEC of the headquarters situation at the Special Session, I reported that I still had not "given up entirely on the possibility that the few members needed to flesh out the headquarters staff can be located or will make themselves available."

However [I added], the time element is now crucial. Unless we can come up with one or two members who are willing to take a chance as staff writers for *The People*, it will soon become necessary for me to devote a large share of my time to that work. When that time comes, of course, it will be at the expense of other duties and responsibilities that are at least as essential to the headquarters operation and the Party's well-being and prospects for growth as is *The People*. Whatever the NEC decides should be done between now and the time for the Regular Session in April [1994] will be done to the full extent of our abilities.

A separate section of my report to the NEC summarized the problems the Party has always had in providing the national headquarters with an adequate staff—problems that date back to De Leon's time. In the concluding portion of that

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section of my report, I included the following:

I have no expectation that this Special Session of the NEC will come up with immediate and concrete solutions to the headquarters problem, at least not in the sense of filling what we now see as vacancies in the headquarters staff. What I do expect, however, is that the NEC will begin the process of developing a plan by which the remaining staff can continue positive work of some kind, and take decisive steps to ensure that the present staff is not cast adrift and simply abandoned.

. . . The staffing problem is crippling the headquarters, and by crippling the headquarters it is crippling the Party in countless ways. For example: It is no secret within the Party that we have been hamstrung in our efforts to generate new literature of any kind, much less of a quality that would demonstrate the relevance of the Socialist Industrial Union program in this “high tech” era of massive and permanent labor displacement.

* * * * *

The SLP remains a political party in the sense that it has a platform or program that addresses the needs of a distinct social class, the working class. No other party fills the bill since all other claimants to the socialist mantle, at least in this country, have long since compromised whatever socialist integrity they may once have had.

If it is decided to attempt to continue *The People* on some basis, either as a semimonthly or monthly publication, we must be reasonably certain that the effort that will be poured into it will produce a positive return of some kind that will contribute toward the objective of rebuilding the SLP as a viable political party of the working class. We must determine if we in the SLP can hope to contribute more to the ultimate success of the labor or socialist movement by producing and disseminating a publication, and whatever new literature we produce as a byproduct to that publication, or to other activities as, for example, preserving the archives, preparing a history of the SLP movement and/or publishing the works of Daniel De Leon. As to the latter, work will continue on it to the extent that time and finances allow, though progress would almost certainly be impeded if it were decided to devote most of our attention to publication of *The People* and other literature.

The NEC could not solve the staffing problem. However, it did adopt a three-point agenda as guidance for the headquarters staff until the NEC met in Regular Session later in the year. In the meantime, the NEC would focus its own attention on how that problem might be resolved, or failing in that, how it might be possible to work around it. The steps the NEC wanted taken in the interlude were the following:

(1) That the National Secretary pursue obtaining materials from the several members who are capable of writing with specific and immediate appeals and, if possible, with a schedule of copy requirements for various publishing dates. We further encourage contributing members to consider writing in an area of specialized interest and initiate ongo-

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ing phone and fax communications with the national office to establish the necessary followup.

(2) We further recommend, as a possible measure to relieve the pressure on the editorial staff, that the National Secretary investigate using suitable materials from news services.

(3) Finally in an effort to maintain sustained publication of *The People*, we recommend that the National Secretary investigate an alternate publication schedule of *The People*, maintaining an eight-page paper, but publishing every third week with 18 issues annually, rather than our current twice monthly publication with 22 issues yearly; and/or other alternate publication schedules.

The above recommendations are being made with the intent that by the time the NEC meets in Regular Session in April the National Secretary will be able to provide us with the information we are seeking so that the NEC as a body can make a careful, informed decision as to how best to stabilize the present headquarters crisis, relieve the pressures on the staff, and maintain regular publication of *The People* until such time as additional staff can be found.

In the meantime we have the assurances that both Comrade Karp and Comrade Boettcher, with the assistance of the National Secretary, are committed to maintaining the current arrangement until the NEC meets in April despite the stress they are under.

The headquarters staff made every effort to abide by this agenda until the NEC met in Regular Session. In certain respects, however, it was a case of too little, too late. As I explained to the NEC in Session:

I cannot claim that the national office has been entirely successful in pursuing and gathering up all the information the NEC requested [at the Special Session]. Many predictable problems, and some unexpected ones, cropped up along the way. There were a few illnesses affecting staff members, or problems affecting their families; stressful occasions when it seemed doubtful that we could complete an issue of the paper on time; one prolonged absence of about three weeks' duration; another of one week's duration, and a host of other interruptions, interferences and obstacles of minor and major proportions to contend with.

* * * * *

However, without delving into every detail about the day-to-day stumbling blocks encountered, or itemizing every other accomplishment of a devoted and determined headquarters staff since the Special Session, I believe it fair and accurate to say that what was done was all, or nearly all, that could be done in the prevailing circumstances.

Before proceeding, it might be well to remind you that some of the information the NEC asked to be gathered in time for this session already had been gathered before the Special Session convened, though none of it had been evaluated by that time. Specifically, we had collected almost as much information about news services as we have now for you to examine. (In the interval, we have subscribed to one such news service and have received information about a new one that has not started to operate.) From past experience, we already knew certain

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things about what any change in frequency involves, at least on the business end of such a change and what is required by the U.S. Postal Service.

These things were made known to the NEC during the Special Session; but there was no opportunity for the NEC to deal with any of that information in a systematic fashion, and that was not expected.

The task circumstances had set for the staff and for myself going into the Special Session was to make the full dimensions and implications of the headquarters crisis crystal clear to the NEC. That was essential. If we succeeded in doing that, what we expected in return, as explained in my report to the Special Session, was "that the NEC will begin the process of developing a plan by which the remaining [headquarters] staff can continue positive work of some kind, and take decisive steps to ensure that the present staff is not cast adrift and simply abandoned."

Between the time of the Special Session in January and the Regular Session in April 1994, new problems arose that precluded any possibility that the staff could hold out any longer. The staff had done everything humanly possible since the 1993 National Convention to provide the Party with an increment of time in which to resolve the staffing problem or to decide on other measures setting a different course. That was why I felt it was necessary to be as forthright as possible in my report to the Regular Session, which I believe is shown from the following excerpt from that statement:

The Special Session held last January was not called to alert the NEC and the membership to a crisis at national headquarters. The crisis has existed for years, and the different stages of its development over time can be traced by reference to the published proceedings of recent National Conventions and the 1992 NEC Session.* * * The Special Session was held to alert the NEC and the membership to the fact that the crisis had reached its final stage. The human material that remained at headquarters was rapidly being used up. It had to be reinforced or it would reach the limits of its endurance within a matter of months. That limit has now been reached. What little capacity may have been left over to afford the NEC and the membership yet another few months in which to come to grips with the situation and produce the needed reinforcements was taken away last month when we were told we have to move

* * * * *

Two meetings were held at national headquarters early this week . . . The first meeting was devoted to reviewing the situation and the problems we were confronted with. The second was to reach a consensus on what those problems meant and how they might be managed. The consensus we reached is not an easy one to accept. Facts are facts, however, and they must be accepted for what they are.

First: The headquarters must be moved. Moving it will be a complicated, difficult and time-consuming task.* * *

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Second: Preparations for the move must begin almost immediately after the NEC Session.* * * We will have about three months to accomplish the move, give or take a week or two. The move itself cannot be made until new facilities are located and leased. Before we can begin to look for those new facilities, however, a decision must be made on the nature of the operation they will be expected to accommodate.

Third: After the move has been accomplished, we cannot expect Comrade Karp to take up where he will have left off where *The People* is concerned. Relieving him of the burden he voluntarily undertook early last year to afford the Party time in which to reinforce the staff can no longer be postponed.

There are only a few sustainable conclusions that can be drawn from those incontestable facts. The first is that a suspension of *The People* now seems unavoidable. Whether that suspension is to be a temporary or a permanent one must also be considered because other decisions that cannot be postponed depend on what that particular decision is.

Perhaps those of us who are involved in the day-to-day operations of the national headquarters are too close to the situation to see what other options may still be open to avoid these conclusions. Perhaps the NEC, assessing that situation from a different vantage point, can see a way out of this predicament. I sincerely hope so. Your support and guidance are needed now more than ever before. But, whatever alternatives or options the NEC sees must be viable and concrete ones, and they must be put into place immediately. That much, I am convinced, is imperative.

Once those immediate and pressing decisions have been made we can move on to plan for the future. The future is the important thing. What potential or promise that future may hold for the SLP depends on what we do to prepare for it today. However, if that potential is to be realized we must prepare for it now. We have nothing to regret. We have all done our very best. The SLP and *The People* have a proud history behind them. And if we act wisely and decisively now, much more can and will be accomplished in the future.

Giving its formal assent to a suspension of *The People* was unquestionably the most painful decision that any National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party has been forced to make since February 1914, when it became necessary to suspend publication of the *Daily People*. Reporting that decision to the Party's membership was certainly the most excruciating one that has fallen to me as your National Secretary. It had to be done, however, and under date of May 2, 1994, a general letter, together with a special booklet containing two documents from the NEC Session, was mailed out.

It was, as stated in that letter, "my painful but inescapable responsibility to inform you that publication of *The People* must be suspended for an indefinite period. The suspen-

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sion will take effect with the issue of May 14, which is now in preparation.”

Incidentally, it had been our hope to publish two issues following the NEC Session, but that proved to be beyond our capacity.

It was also necessary to inform the membership that it was “not possible to say with any degree of certainty how long the period of suspension will be. Hopefully, it will be for a relatively short time. At a minimum, however, publication will not resume until sometime after new headquarters have been located and leased, the move is complete, and the headquarters resumes ‘normal’ operations in other respects. A thorough reassessment of the headquarters situation will then take place.”

The formal decision to suspend publication was reached by the NEC. That decision was based, in part, on information contained in the opening section of my report to the NEC, in which the critical stage the crisis at national headquarters has reached is explained, and, in part, on first-hand information provided by members of the headquarters staff.

The inescapable conclusion that publication must be suspended, at least temporarily, was only reached after many hours of debate and discussion that inevitably led the NEC into a sober evaluation of an overwhelming set of physical facts and circumstances. That debate, in which members of the headquarters staff participated, made it clear to the NEC that no matter how determined and dedicated the staff might be, the combined effects of their small numbers, the stressful and draining efforts of the past year, and the overwhelming problems associated with preparations for, and the actual execution of the move, rendered uninterrupted publication impossible to sustain.

I cannot provide you with a text of the debate that took place at the NEC Session, or convey to you the depths of the emotions felt and expressed. However, I regret that deficiency much less than that of being unable to convey to you the spirit of positive determination that took hold once the impact of the realization that suspension was necessary had run its course and the compelling need to get on with the Party’s work had taken hold.

The headquarters move itself is not entirely germane to this review, and I regret that I cannot take time to provide you with a detailed account of how it was accomplished and how every member of the staff contributed to it. Perhaps there will be an opportunity to do that on another occasion. With apologies to Comrades Donna Bills and Genevieve Gunderson, who are not mentioned by name in the following excerpt from a letter I wrote to NEC Member George S. Tay-

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lor, the following will have to suffice:

Dear Comrade Taylor:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letters (2) of July 2. Thank you.

By now you should have received the letter of June 29 in which I informed the NEC that a lease has been signed and that we will soon be moving into new headquarters in downtown Sunnyvale. The way things look now, it may be possible for us to accomplish the move ourselves with a minimum (if any) professional help. If that scheme works out it should save the Party a sizable chunk of money. If we are not completely successful, we will at least reduce the expense. At any rate, we rented a truck today, and Comrades Boettcher and Parker have it half filled with some of the heaviest and most awkward things we have to move.

Incidentally, this renting and packing of a truck is not premature. The downstairs part of what has been leased is available for occupancy now, hence the decision to start in on the actual move. We hope to have the New York Labor News cabinets and shelving, plus all the literature, moved within a few days. We are taking along all of the archives as well, and as much as possible of what has been earmarked for the downstairs portion.

The complexity of the move has been reduced by several factors. First: Because we don't have room for everything, a number of metal desks and metal cabinets will be sold. If they can't be sold they will be junked.

Second: Comrade Karp has successfully managed to consolidate the archives into about half the number of steel filing cabinets they occupied until a week or so ago, which will also enable us to sell off some of those cabinets. Some of this consolidation was accomplished by placing the contents of steel cabinets into cardboard transfer files, which are much easier to move and store.

Third: I have decided to have several pieces of wooden furniture re-finished, including desks and a table that will be used at the new headquarters. The desks date back to the 1930s or 1940s, are made of mahogany and other fine woods, are all of excellent workmanship, and are all structurally sound. Unfortunately, they are also victims of some sloppy painting jobs and normal wear. The old "Subcommittee table" and another desk date back to the turn of the century. The expense is not inconsiderable (\$400–\$500 per piece); but, the price includes pickup from our present headquarters and delivery to the new one. By deducting what it would cost to have professional movers simply pick them up and deposit them at the new headquarters, I consider it a bargain—not only financially, but in terms of what these fine old pieces will add to the atmosphere at the Party's new "home."

What is germane, however, are a few particulars about the new headquarters and the lease that was signed on June 28, 1994. These particulars were summed up when I wrote to inform the NEC that the lease had been signed, as follows:

1. The term of the lease is for 36 months, commencing August 1,

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1994, and terminating July 31, 1997.

2. The base rent will be \$2,338.90, with increases not to exceed six percent after 12 and 24 months.

3. The headquarters will occupy approximately 2,462 square feet divided into two separate units, or suites. The larger, Suite 209, is air conditioned and will be used for offices. It is situated on the second floor of the three-story building, and covers about 1,583 square feet. The second, Suite 113, is not air conditioned, and will be used primarily for storage and mailing. It is situated on the ground floor, and covers about 879 square feet.

At present, the headquarters occupy about 4,000 square feet, for which we pay \$2,800 a month, plus a monthly average of about \$300 in utilities. The new lease is a "full service" agreement, which includes all utilities (electricity, garbage, parking, etc.), except telephone. The new agreement also provides for daily janitorial service.

Accordingly, while losing about 1,540 square feet, or about 39 percent of the space we occupy at present, we will be saving about \$760 in monthly expenses on rent and utilities. We will also have to dispose of some outworn and outmoded office fixtures, some old cabinets, and some other ancient and awful things that we lugged from New York to fit into the smaller space—and good riddance.

* * * * *

There undoubtedly are many more details that could be mentioned, and if you have any specific questions about the new headquarters or the lease, please raise them. For now, however, I am relieved to have this obstacle out of the way so I can turn my attention to the move itself, after which all of us can get on to the problems that concern us most.

Fraternally yours, etc.

The problem that concerned us most, of course, was how to get *The People* back into print. That particular problem—and many others that stemmed from and led up to the suspension—gave rise to a considerable amount of correspondence within the NEC before the decision to resume publication was made. On May 6, 1994, for example, NEC Member Bernard Bortnick wrote the following about some of that correspondence:

May 31, 1994—To A. Kleist on 1995 Convention and resuming T.P. publication. The NEC can come up with all kinds of suggestions about reformatting *The People*, suggesting new publishing schedules, and generally, tinkering with the mechanics but, as was repeatedly stated, this matter is entirely about staff. On that account there is no one, with the possible exception of Comrade Karp who knows the membership better than you, and hence understands our resources better than you. In my view a trusted Party member needs to personally survey what the field has to offer. The best person I can think of for that purpose is you. Can you take off from your N.O. responsibilities either for a tour or several shorter tours wherein you can personally assess the prospects of

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finding staff? The alternate idea is to prepare a long list of prospective staff members; this can be assembled from section organizers supplementing the knowledge you already have. What remains unknown is the prospects among the national members-at-large. From this a "short list" can be assembled, and the specific individuals assessed.

It was in response to this that I wrote a lengthy reply, from which the following excerpts are taken.

It is true that much of the emphasis has been placed on the staffing question. However, that emphasis has always been in terms of maintaining an organization, a headquarters and a regular publication as they were prior to suspension. The message I delivered to the 1993 National Convention and the NEC's Special Session last January was: If you, the membership, want to maintain things as they have been, then one, or two, or some other number from among you must step forward to make it possible. However, I have always been very deliberate about adding that if the staff that was needed to maintain things as they were did not come forward, the Party had to come up with a plan that would enable the remaining staff to do constructive work of some kind.

I do not believe there is any realistic possibility of adding staff in the foreseeable future. While "beating the bushes" for possibilities in my reports to national gatherings, I have had no serious expectations on that score for at least two years. If you go back over my reports to the 1993 National Convention, and the NEC's Special and Regular Sessions, I think you will see that is so, and that as much or more emphasis was placed on the need to develop a "plan" if additional staffing failed to materialize.

In my opinion, we should stop thinking about adding to the staff, at least for now, and start thinking about what can be done with the staff we have left. That is what I hoped the NEC would concentrate on last April . . . That is what I hoped to convey when I said:

"The task circumstances had set for the staff and for myself going into the Special Session was to make the full dimensions and implications of the headquarters crisis crystal clear to the NEC. That was essential. If we succeeded in doing that, what we expected in return, as explained in my report to the Special Session, was 'that the NEC will begin the process of developing a plan by which the remaining [headquarters] staff can continue positive work of some kind, and take decisive steps to ensure that the present staff is not cast adrift and simply abandoned.'" (Emphasis added.)

I tried to emphasize this again at the end of the first section of my report, in part, as follows:

"The Special Session . . . was not called to alert the NEC and the membership to a crisis at national headquarters. The crisis has existed for years * * * The Special Session was held to alert the NEC and the membership to the fact that the crisis had reached its final stage. The human material that remained at headquarters was rapidly being used up. It had to be reinforced or it would reach the limits of its endurance within a matter of months. That limit has now been reached. What little capacity may have been left over to afford the NEC and the membership yet another few months in which to come to grips with the

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situation and produce the needed reinforcements was taken away last month when we were told we have to move

* * * * *

“Perhaps those of us who are involved in the day-to-day operations of the national headquarters are too close to the situation to see what other options may still be open to avoid these conclusions. Perhaps the NEC, assessing that situation from a different vantage point, can see a way out of this predicament. I sincerely hope so. Your support and guidance are needed now more than ever before. But, whatever alternatives or options the NEC sees must be viable and concrete ones, and they must be put into place immediately. That much, I am convinced, is imperative. [Emphasis added.]

“Once those immediate and pressing decisions have been made we can move on to plan for the future”

It may be that the last phrase cited threw everyone off the mark. What I meant by it was something to the effect that once we had a plan we could get down to the specifics of how to implement that “plan for the future.” However, the discussion never got around to that, and I don’t really think it was because that particular sentence was taken to mean something different from what I intended. There were too many other words and phrases to compensate for it—at least enough for someone to request clarification. What it was, I think, was that the need to suspend came as a shock, in spite of the earlier warnings, and because it came as a shock the NEC was never able to turn the corner.

At any rate, if you go back to my reports I think you will see that I placed as much emphasis on this need to devise a plan for the future if additional staff was not forthcoming as on the staffing problem itself: Staff, if we were to maintain the status quo; Alternate Plan if staff was not forthcoming.

“Tinkering” is as good a word as any to describe what has to be done, though I would prefer to think of it as developing a strategy that sets realistic priorities that start with and proceed from the staff that is already in place. Regardless of what term we use to describe it, it must embrace the entire headquarters operation (not just the editorial problem), and probably the entire organization.

I think it is time that we did some brainstorming on a broad scale. Here’s one possible scenario that occurs to me:

Might there be some way to reduce the administrative and organizational responsibilities of the National Secretary without simultaneously undermining the authority and integrity of the post itself? Might there be some way to move the two poles of National Secretary and Editor closer together by “tinkering” with the way things are set up at the present time? Is that a realistic possibility given the present incumbent? If it is, what are the specifics? If it isn’t, what are the alternatives? If it is realistic, is it desirable? That is, would it produce a better result than was produced when we had a paper, or would it simply dissipate what energy and funds we have left and cut us off from doing something else, such as publishing *De Leon*?

Another thing to consider might be the form and structure of the SLP as we know it. The Party’s form and structure today are essentially unchanged from what they were when the present Constitution was adopted in 1904. Back then, the Party could count its membership by

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the thousands and its subdivisions by the hundreds, whereas today there are fewer members than there were sections in 1898, when, according to the Socialist Almanac published that year, the number of sections was 343.

Pursuing this a bit further, in a brief essay on the Party's development toward the end of the Socialist Almanac, Lucien Sanial wrote:

"The Socialist Labor party of the United States was reorganized and its present platform was adopted by the national convention held at Chicago in October, 1889. Until then the party had been an educational rather than a political organization. True, it had on several occasions and in several places nominated tickets, and some of its candidates in Chicago had actually been elected. But in those days the lines between Anarchism and Socialism were not as tightly drawn as they are today"

Anyone not familiar with SLP history might find this summary a bit confusing. It appears that Sanial was equating "educational . . . organization" with anarchism, and "political organization" with socialism. In a sense that was true. However, the anarchism Sanial had in mind was not the social concept of no government, but the absence of a coherent, guiding principle for the SLP—the anarchy within. The SLP was its own student, and it had to go through a period of self-definition before it could emerge as a coherent political party.

He also meant (and somewhere De Leon made the same point) that an organization does not become a political party until it engages in electoral activity. If an organization does not run candidates for public office it may still be a political organization, but it is not a political party: It is something else, some other type of organization, perhaps an "educational organization."

* * * * *

The question is, what type of organization is the SLP today? The specific answer is what must be decided on the basis of the human and material resources that are available to us in the here and now. Our goal may be to reestablish the SLP as a viable political party; but that goal, and the means available for achieving it, are two different things and cannot be confused.

One thing is certain: The status quo at national headquarters, as we understood it from the time *The People* went biweekly in December 1979 down to Whitney's defection, is dead and gone. We have to start over. It's no longer a matter of acknowledging what we cannot do, but of determining what we can do. Right now we are doing nothing because of the move, etc. Once the move has been accomplished, however, we will have to do something. I don't think that something is trying to restore the former status quo, i.e., I don't think we can build the Party by first building a staff. I think we have to build a staff by first building the Party. We have to get the best out of what we have while we still have it. Once we all get on the same wave length, so to speak, we can get on to the hard part, which is, Where do we go from here?

* * * * *

. . . The closest we have come to developing an overall strategy was to adopt policies on intervention in issue-oriented coalitions and trade union work, and the only other fairly recent statement on overall strat-

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egy that I remember was made by Comrade Karp in one of his convention reports. I don't remember the exact words, but it was to the effect that the SLP was committed to organizing the "politically uncommitted workers" and that we cannot build the SLP by "raiding" other organizations for reasons that retain all of their original validity.

Intervention and union work today are as impossible for the SLP as are electoral campaigns and an eight-page weekly chock full of original copy. So, where does that leave us?

To repeat: These are only random thoughts and not proposals, or even serious suggestions. They are only meant to help us get started on what I hope will soon develop into a wide-ranging discussion that might enable us to hit on a workable plan.

Another example from the thought given to the headquarters situation and the Party's other problems during the suspension period is a letter I received from NEC Member Donna Bills. In her letter of June 22, 1994, Comrade Bills wrote:

The letters also reinforced for me how important *The People* is for our members, and for those whom we hope will become members. In this connection, I note from the above correspondence your concern that *The People* resume publication "before its suspension makes it impossible to hold the SLP together" and your urging the NEC begin a discussion on the matter. (June 9 to Comrade Kleist.) I also note your observation that, "We need a paper, a staff, some constructive activity in the sections, some new literature, some good publicity—and money." (June 7 to Comrade Bortnick.)

I'm not prepared to suggest anything specific at this point, but I have been mulling all of this over in my mind for several weeks. From our discussions at the two recent sessions, I know that we all recognize the important role *The People* plays in providing organizational cohesiveness. With the suspension of *The People*, I've noticed from working at national headquarters that activity in the field has dropped off precipitously. While the disruption of the national office because of the move plays a part in this development, I believe that suspension of *The People* is also an important factor. Because of this development in the field, and despite all that was said at our recent sessions, I'm in agreement with you that we must try to get *The People* up and running again if we hope to not only build the SLP, but also to maintain what we have. Your comments to Comrade Bortnick that I cited above will help me to organize and focus my thoughts on the overall problem.

In the meantime, I can't get away from the idea that it may be possible to somehow publish a four-page paper, and to perhaps expand *The People's* function to include some of the routine aspects of your responsibilities as National Secretary, i.e., agitation. The latter may lighten your workload somewhat if you were to spend a certain amount of time on getting the paper out. But, like I said above, my thinking on this is all very general at this point. Perhaps when the headquarters move is behind us I'll have a better perspective on the situation and will then be able to come up with some concrete ideas.

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Comrade Bills' letter also elicited another lengthy reply from me, which, considering the most recent developments at national headquarters, also seems germane. When acknowledging receipt of Comrade Bills' letter, I wrote:

Dear Comrade Bills:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of June 22.

What I meant to say when I wrote to Comrade Kleist on June 9 was that the decision to suspend must not be the final decision that the NEC makes. I do not know if we can start publishing again, in spite of what I wrote to Comrade Bortnick last week. I have my doubts, as do all of us. What I feel certain of, however, is that without *The People* it will be very difficult to hold the SLP together indefinitely. Without *The People* it is also difficult to see how we could hope to build up the membership: it is too important to get along without.

However, if we cannot come up with a way to begin publishing again we cannot simply fold up shop. There are other things that need doing, and our ability to do them will depend in large measure on the support we receive from what will then be an unreplaceable organization. We will have to convince the remaining membership to stick together and provide financial assistance to allow us to dispose of the archives, publish at least a Selected Works of Daniel De Leon of some kind, and possibly a history of the SLP. These would be worthy undertakings that would eventually redound to the benefit of the socialist movement and the working class, though it is unlikely that they would do anything to save the SLP itself.

Perhaps we should not be thinking in these terms just yet. Perhaps we should be concentrating all of our attention on how it might be possible to resume publication on some basis. If so, however, I don't believe questions of size and frequency are the ones that should consume our attention. Those questions, as I suggested to Comrade Coretz recently, will be answered once we answer the question of who will be responsible for getting the paper out. Comrade Bortnick is absolutely right about that. We must either find new staff or juggle the staff we have. If we find that the only possible way to resume publication anytime soon is by shifting things around at the headquarters, which my present thinking tells me is the only real possibility, we have to be prepared for the consequences—and we can be certain that there will be consequences to any decision we make.

For example: Regardless of what is eventually decided about *The People*, the headquarters have to move. That means we either have to sign a lease, or go month-to-month. Going month-to-month would only be possible if we figured that we were on the verge of closing down once and for all. We cannot proceed on that premise, however, partly because no such decision has been made, and partly because we couldn't possibly move again while trying to publish a newspaper. Accordingly, we have to enter into a longer rental agreement, and that means two or three years at a minimum. The lease we are about to sign is for two-and-one-half years. It is for a split property, which, if necessary, will enable us to retreat into one part or the other after the lease expires. In the meantime, we will have to meet the rent and the payroll, and that means we will have to keep a careful eye on Party finances. Party fi-

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nances will almost certainly become a severe problem again if we cannot find a way to start publishing *The People*. (Indeed, they are already beginning to concern me.) If we do start publishing, however, there is no guarantee that it will result in any significant improvement in Party finances, and publishing will certainly cut into the reserves. In addition, it may only postpone the inevitable, and eventually cut us off (financially, at least) from implementing an alternate plan.

Fraternally yours, etc.

In answer to another letter from Comrade Bortnick, the contents of which are explained in my reply, I wrote the following:

Since you are about to leave the country for two weeks, I will not take time out to respond to your letters now (with the exception of one paragraph from your second letter)

The exception . . . has to do with the following paragraph from your letter of July 10–23:

“About any upcoming Special Session, past sessions have shown that they can be most effective if suitable ‘priming’ takes place, or if a direction is clearly established pointing toward resolution of problems. I realize that this is what you [I] are trying to do in stimulating enough commentary from the NEC such that formulated ideas can either be summarized, refined, or reconstituted such that we all leave with the basic issues resolved to the degree our present size will permit that to happen.”

During our conversation you expressed a similar view and some doubt that a Special Session of the NEC would serve any purpose without a concrete proposal on how to resume publication being submitted in advance for prior consideration, to which I replied by saying that you must have been reading my mind. In addition, however, I expressed the opinion that it would be more important for the NEC to meet if no such proposal was submitted in advance—not so the NEC could take a stab at coming up with one, but to deliberate on a future without *The People* in it.

It may be that the NEC would approve a concrete plan that struck them as workable without the necessity of meeting in Special Session: A conference call might be sufficient to resolve any doubts about such a plan, provided it is well thought out and the commitments needed to implement it were iron-clad ones. Frankly, your commitment to submit one or more articles a month was one of the building blocks I had in mind for piecing together a recommendation to the NEC. Your statement that you are willing to submit “one [article] for each issue” (your letter of June 30) saves me one step, but before I can fit it into any proposal I will need to know whether you had biweekly, semimonthly or monthly publication in mind.

For your information, I am submitting a recommendation to the NEC that it cancel its decision to meet in September without setting a later date. Everyone on the NEC seemed to sense that more time would be needed on this end, and they are right. I have given copies of your letters of June 20 and July 10–23 to Comrades Bills, Boettcher and Karp to go over this weekend, and will meet with them on Monday,

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August 15 to go over the whole ground. We will undoubtedly have to meet and talk more than once before things start to fall into place. Hopefully, I will have something concrete to report in a reasonably short time.

The NEC, as may be surmised from the preceding, had voted to meet in Special Session a second time to address the headquarters problem and how it might be possible to resume publication of *The People*. However, the NEC would eventually postpone and then rescind its decision to meet in Special Session after the staff meetings alluded to in what I wrote to Comrade Bortnick. At those meetings the staff concluded that a Special Conference of potential contributors to *The People* should be held at the national headquarters. That conference was held last September, and the results were reported to the NEC in the following letter, which was mailed under date of September 20:

To the Members of the NEC
Dear Comrades:

This is to inform you that the national office held a special conference of potential contributors to *The People*. The conference met at national headquarters over the weekend of September 10–11. Seven members invited by the headquarters staff attended, as follows: Bernard Bortnick, Bruce Cozzini, Linda Featheringill, Barbara Graymont, Frank Prince, Diane Secor and Charles Turner. (Two other members who received invitations, Comrades Sid Fink and Angeline Kleist, declined for health reasons.) Five members of the headquarters staff also participated, namely Comrades Donna Bills, Ken Boettcher, Genevieve Gunderson, Nathan Karp and me.

The purposes of the conference were simple and direct. They were to determine if the members invited were willing to commit themselves to supplying a steady and reliable flow of copy for publication. Those who attended were informed that unless they, or at least a certain number of them, were prepared to make such a commitment there was virtually no hope of resuming publication with any genuine expectation of success.

In practical terms, the conference resulted in the following commitments being made: Comrade Bortnick reiterated his previous commitment to provide one article for each issue “based on the previous schedule,” i.e., semimonthly publication. Comrade Prince made essentially the same commitment, i.e., two articles a month, or one per issue. Comrade Cozzini pledged three to four pages (one to two articles) a month. He also expressed interest in doing book reviews and volunteered to assist with other editorial tasks. Comrade Secor pledged one two- to three-page article a month. Comrade Featheringill pledged to submit two articles a month. Comrade Turner promised one a month. Comrade Graymont promised at least one article every other month.

On Monday, September 12, the headquarters staff met to go over

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these commitments and to decide if they held enough promise to begin preparing for a resumption of publication. The consensus was that we received less than we had hoped for, but that if all the pledges are kept, and if a majority of the articles received proved usable, the effort could and should be made with a reasonable expectation of success. Accordingly, the staff is prepared to make the effort.

While no definite date for resuming publication was set at the September 12 meeting, the consensus was that it should be possible to go to press again in November. However, before setting a specific date and making an announcement to the membership and the readership, the staff will have to go over the ground again. A number of practical problems must be resolved before any irrevocable decisions are made regarding size and frequency. Some procedural and other guidelines for contributors have to be prepared, and a schedule setting deadlines must also be put together.

The immediate question is whether or not the NEC will authorize the national office to resume publication of *The People* on the basis of the commitments received as soon as these and some other practical arrangements can be made. If so, I do not believe a second Special Session will be necessary. Any NEC member who disagrees should, of course, make a motion to that effect. In the meantime, I am submitting a ballot recommending that the NEC authorize the national office to start publishing as soon as it is ready. Please mark your ballot and return it in time to reach me by Monday, October 3. However, members of the NEC who have questions they would like answered before voting are urged to contact me by telephone.

Fraternally yours, etc.

The results of that vote were reported to the NEC under date of October 3, as follows:

To the Members of the NEC

Dear Comrades:

This is to inform you that the vote on a proposal for resuming publication of *The People* has been completed, with the following results:

All seven NEC members returned their ballots within the deadline, and all seven cast their votes in favor of the proposal. Accordingly, the proposal was unanimously adopted.

NEC Members Bills, Coretz, Fink, Fisher and Taylor offered the following comments:

D. Bills: "Absolutely yes. I understand that it's not going to be an easy task to begin, and sustain, publication of *The People*; and that maintaining publication of *The People* will affect other areas of Party administration and organization on the national level. However, I believe that *The People* is essential to Party cohesion and Party building. Without *The People* we are lost. As to how much of a detrimental effect the national office energies diverted to *The People* will have on other organizational matters, I can't say. Hopefully, the scales will be tipped in favor of the Party in the long run. But I do feel that if *The People* can be published at all, it should be."

H. Coretz: "The recommendation of the National Secretary has my endorsement. The workers of the Sept. 10-11 conference deserve our

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respect, thanks, and cooperation.”

S. Fink: “I very much appreciate the manner with which the national office handled a very difficult time for the Party and helped us over the hurdles. It also helps the morale to have so many of our capable comrades commit themselves to *The People’s* republishing schedule.”

L. Fisher: “I have no comment.

“I have expressed myself on numerous occasions re the publication of *The People*.”

G.S. Taylor: “Your Sept. 20 letter re the Sept. 10–11 . . . meetings seem promising. My remaining concern is their ‘long-term’ abilities.

“I had no idea that members like Bruce Cozzini and Diane Secor would be able to undertake this task.

“My best wishes to all of you.

“Without *The People*, we will all continue to feel so ‘helpless,’ what with all the things that are happening in this capitalist world.”

Fraternally yours,

ROBERT BILLS

National Secretary

Publication resumed with the issue of November 12, 1994, and for a brief time it seemed that all the pieces, or almost all of them, were going to fall into place, and on November 20, I wrote to those who attended the Special Conference:

To the SLP Members Concerned

Dear Comrades:

First, I want to express my deepest thanks and appreciation to all of you for keeping the commitments you made at the Special Conference last September. I also want to thank all of you for what I take to be your patience and understanding over my inability to provide you with any feedback on what you have so dutifully and promptly sent in—particularly those of you who undoubtedly were disappointed not to see one or more of your articles in print. Hopefully, I will be better situated in that regard after the New Year.

To assist you in planning your work for *The People* in the months ahead, I have prepared and am enclosing a 1995 Writers’ Schedule, the most important feature of which is the list of copy deadlines that appear in the third column.

* * * * *

For your information, Comrade Nathan Karp recently underwent bypass heart surgery. Certain postoperative complications have developed that will prolong his recuperation for an indefinite period . . . In the meantime, however, and apart from the emotional stress this development has brought into the national office, Comrade Karp obviously will not be able to fulfill his commitment to write for every issue. Comrade Boettcher and I will do everything necessary to fill the gap, but any additional help we receive from you in the interlude will be sincerely appreciated.

With best wishes for the holidays,

Fraternally yours, etc.

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Since publication was resumed last November, 16 issues of *The People* have been printed. It would not have been possible to start publishing again if not for the concrete support received from the group of members who attended the September Conference and other contributors in the field.

According to a count made as this was being outlined, and excluding all reprints, 176 articles have appeared in the 16 issues printed since publication resumed. Sixty-two of the articles printed in those 16 issues, or 37 percent of the total, came from members in the field. The other 63 percent, or 107 articles, were written by the “staff,” which is to say, by Comrades Kenneth Boettcher, Nathan Karp and myself. By splitting those 16 issues into four equal groups of four issues apiece, however, a somewhat different picture begins to emerge.

During the first quarter, 46 articles (excluding reprints) were printed. Of those, 23 came from members who attended the September Conference, which accounted for 50 percent of the total number of articles printed. Twenty-two articles, or 48 percent of the total printed, were written by the “staff.” One additional article from the field was printed.

During the second quarter, 43 articles were printed, of which 16, or 37 percent, came from the seven “conferees,” and 27, or 63 percent, came from Comrade Boettcher and me.

During the third quarter, 46 articles were printed. Fourteen came from the September conferees and represented 30 percent of the total. Three articles, or about 7 percent, came from other members in the field, while the balance—29 articles, or 63 percent—were written by Comrades Boettcher, Karp and myself.

During the fourth quarter—which includes the most recent issue of July 22—41 articles appeared. Only nine of those 41 articles, about 22 percent of the total, came from the seven “con-ferees,” while three, representing 7 percent, came from other mem-bers. The remaining 71 percent, or 29 articles, were written by the “editorial staff.”

The preceding synopsis, together with the letter of June 29, 1995, included at the beginning of this section of my report, brings us down to the present moment. The headquarters staff met on July 7, and again on July 10, to go over the

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ground before this convention convened. However, nothing transpired at either of those meetings that would alter the situation.

From what has been presented here, it should be apparent that publication of *The People* cannot continue with the physical resources available. In a sense, we have come full circle and find ourselves in a situation that is similar to the one that existed at the time of the 1993 National Convention, but with some important differences. The most important of those differences as they affect *The People* is that we have gone from what was, at best, a woefully inadequate “editorial staff” to virtually no editorial staff at all. Comrade Karp has already overextended himself against his doctor’s advice, and cannot be expected to continue. Comrade Boettcher is down to a 20-hour-week schedule, and his circumstances will not change. The national office has virtually been absorbed by the editorial department and cannot function properly. One indication of that was the decision to hold this convention in July rather than April as originally intended. As I explained in the following letter to the NEC, under date of February 17:

Dear Comrades:

Please give this letter prompt and careful consideration.

The 42nd National Convention is scheduled to convene on Saturday, April 29, 1995. I am herewith recommending that this date be canceled and that the convention be scheduled to convene instead on Saturday, July 15, 1995. There are several reasons for this recommendation.

First: Sometime between now and April 29 it will be necessary to write a report to the National Convention, promote attendance at the National Convention Banquet, designate a fund for the National Convention Banquet collection, promote that fund and provide the sections adequate time in which to plan and hold fund-raising events for the fund’s benefit, designate a banquet speaker and master of ceremonies, etc. There are only 10 weeks remaining in which to accomplish all that, while simultaneously putting out four or five more issues of *The People*.

Second: Virtually every issue of *The People* published since last November has consumed the entire production period, with no room to spare. The flow of copy from the field has not been sufficient to ease this facet of the problem by much, and the difficulty has only worsened since Comrade Karp was removed from the scene last November.

Third: The production period for the issue of April 22 will end on Monday, April 10. This will be followed by a one-week break before the production period for the issue of May 13 starts on Tuesday, April 18. What this means is that I will have precisely seven days (April 11–17) to prepare my report to the convention. (Hopefully the NEC does not expect me to act as speaker or master of ceremonies for the banquet. If

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it does, however, I will have even less time in which to prepare a report.)

Fourth: The production period for the issue of June 24 will end on Monday, June 13. That will be followed by a break of two weeks before the production period for the issue of July 22 starts on Tuesday, June 27. That will be followed by another break of one week before work on the issue of August 12 will begin. What this means is that I would have 18 days (June 13–June 26 and July 11–14) to prepare a report for the convention.

There is no way I can sift through two years' correspondence and write a report in seven days' time, not even a brief one, much less go on to edit, revise and otherwise get that report ready for the delegates while simultaneously working on *The People* for May 13 (and possibly a banquet address).

By postponing the convention until July I would not only gain time in which to prepare my report, but time in which to promote the banquet and the fund with eight issues of *The People* and a national mailing or two.

Incidentally, it would not be necessary to conduct elections for delegates over again, unless specific individual delegates are somehow inconvenienced by the change I am asking for and could not serve. However, I don't see any alternative but to take our chances and to deal with any problems of that sort on a case-by-case basis.

Please mull this over carefully and give me a call if you have any questions. Don't put this off, however, because time is of the utmost importance.

Fraternally yours, etc.

When returning their ballots on the recommendation that the dates be changed, six NEC members commented as follows:

D. Bills: "I approve of postponing the National Convention to July 15, because it is obvious from the National Secretary's letter that given the circumstances at national headquarters, specifically the necessity of devoting the majority of his time to publication of *The People*, there would be no time to prepare any kind of adequate report for an April convention.

"Even with the change to July and the extra weeks afforded for convention preparations, I am very much concerned about the burden that still falls on the National Secretary's shoulders and the impact that has on the organization, and on him personally. He must still see that *The People* is published between now and then under trying circumstances, try to attend to his duties as National Secretary and Financial Secretary, publicize the National Convention, prepare a report to the National Convention, attend and participate in a four-day convention and then be immediately confronted with postconvention work and preparations for the next issue of *The People*—all this with an understaffed national headquarters.

"The National Secretary for a long time now has been regularly working 60+ hours a week, which increases to 70+ hours during the week that immediately precedes a publication deadline. With the excep-

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tion of the week off last December, he has been averaging only two days off per month since *The People* resumed publication. In addition, the July convention date also means that the National Secretary will have to forego a rest (vacation) until sometime in mid-September at the earliest, a time that may exclude his family because of school.

“Unfortunately, for the immediate future at least, I don’t see how his burden can be eased. And until it is eased, it can only impact negatively on the organization.”

B. Bortnick: “Your argument for an extension has been carefully thought out and I’m convinced you’re right. I assume that your word-processing equipment has relieved some of the repetitive and formatting issues that used to require repetition of the same material, but I also assume that the overall reduction in staff has offset this advantage. I know it’s the thinking and time consumed in reviewing materials and preparing remarks that is so time consuming.”

H. Coretz: “This needed change can afford the membership time to carry on a burst of Party activity that will have an important bearing on the success of our National Convention.”

S. Fink: “By all means let’s take all necessary time to do it right!”

L. Fisher: “I agree with the reasons given by the National Secretary for the change of the National Convention.”

A. Kleist: “I wholeheartedly agree with the National Secretary’s recommendation. The reasons which were specified in his letter to the members of the NEC, dated February 17, 1995, are definitely valid.”

On motion, the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

At 11:31 a.m., a 10-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 11:41 a.m.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

State of Organization

Party Membership—The following changes in the composition and distribution of the membership occurred in 1994:

The NEC accepted nine applications for membership, and sections reported admitting four new members. Nine members died during the year, seven were dropped for nonpayment of dues, six resigned and one was expelled by the NEC. Six transfers were carried through. The net loss in membership in 1994 was 10.

Sections—There were 15 sections in 11 states on January 1, 1994. Seven reported net losses of one to four members, and two reported net gains of one each.

The NEC voted to disband Section Dade County, Fla., in June 1994 after it learned that no business meeting had

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been held since September 1993 and that the three remaining members were not able to carry on by themselves. However, I delayed informing the organizer, Comrade Arla A. Albaugh, for several months. As I explained when I wrote to him in November:

. . . I have not carried through on the NEC's decision for several reasons, but primarily because I wanted to be certain that the former young members had irrevocably determined to abandon the Party. Apparently there is no reason to hold out any hope on that score any longer. Accordingly . . . the time would seem to be appropriate for disbanding the section and transferring you and Comrade Beck to the national organization as national members-at-large.

* * * * *

I'm very sorry it had to end this way for Section Dade County. At one point the prospects seemed so bright. It's a shame, but I know that you and Comrade Beck did your very best. You have every right to be proud of the effort. It's too bad that those who deserted the section and the Party did not have what it takes. But they didn't, so all of us will just have to carry on until we find other working men and women who have the "right stuff."

Three of the five members who organized the section in 1993 (one having moved out of the Miami area and another having died in the meantime) were transferred to the national organization.

No other section was disbanded during the year, and no new section was organized. Accordingly, as of January 1, 1995, there were 14 sections in 11 states.

Despite the Northridge earthquake in January 1994, Section Los Angeles held 12 monthly business meetings during the year, with three to four members in attendance. One new member was admitted, but he resigned within months. One member died, one was dropped for nonpayment of dues and one was transferred out. The section sustained a net loss of three members during the year.

The member who transferred was the section's financial secretary. I had hoped that the NEC would be able to devote some attention to the section's problems when it met in Regular Session in April of 1994. That proved to be impossible, however, and after the session I wrote to the organizer, Comrade Elizabeth Stanich, to explain. What follows is taken from that letter:

The section's predicament was reported to the NEC in Session. Un-

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fortunately, the NEC was not able to devote any of its time to assessing the section's problems because the national headquarters situation forced it to devote virtually all of its time to that single question. However, the NEC is fully informed of the section's problems and NEC members undoubtedly will discuss them in correspondence. What might result from such a discussion is an open question. To be frank, so many sections have similar problems that a thorough assessment of them all must receive very careful attention, and that very soon. That question, or multiplicity of questions, will be at the top of the agenda once the headquarters move has been completed and things return to "normal." Hopefully, that will be a matter of weeks rather than of months.

In the meantime, however, and since you expressed some doubt about it, I want to say that the action you took by assuming responsibility for the section's finances was entirely appropriate. Indeed, you are to be commended for stepping into the breach, just as you have done on so many occasions in the past.

I wish there was something more concrete I could offer in the way of practical suggestions to ease your burden

Unfortunately, other developments prevented me from pursuing this with the NEC, and the situation in Los Angeles has not improved. One further indication of how serious the section's problems are is that it failed to elect a delegate to this convention.

To repeat what I wrote to Comrade Stanich, "So many sections have similar problems that a thorough assessment of them all must receive very careful attention, and that very soon." Such an assessment should be made by this convention. Here, however, I can offer only a bare-bones summary suggesting what conditions prevail in each of the other 13 sections.

There were no major changes affecting Section Sacramento in 1994. One member was added when he transferred from another section, so that the section had a net gain of one member during the year. The section held 12 business meetings with an average attendance of four.

Section San Francisco Bay Area reported one resignation in 1994, and one member was transferred out, for a net loss of two members. Twelve business meetings were held with eight to nine members present.

Section St. Petersburg dropped one member for nonpayment of dues and received one member who transferred. The section missed one business meeting during the year. Five or six members attended the 11 meetings held.

Section Cook Co. suffered a grievous loss in 1994 with the

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death of its organizer, Comrade George Milonas, and has experienced a number of problems since. However, it did hold 12 business meetings with an average attendance of three.

Section Wayne Co. also held 12 regular business meetings during the year, with an average attendance of four. One member was dropped for nonpayment of dues. The section has a number of serious problems, as may be adduced from its not being represented at this convention.

One member resigned from Section Minneapolis during the year, but one new member was admitted. For various reasons, however, the section held only 10 business meetings in 1994. The average attendance at business meetings last year was three.

Section New York City met only four times in 1994 and is not represented at this convention. There is virtually no communication between the section and the national office, and there seems to be little likelihood of conditions there improving in the foreseeable future.

There was no change in the composition of the membership of Section Akron last year. However, the section held only 10 business meetings with the minimum of three members in attendance.

Section Cleveland also missed two business meetings last year. The average attendance at those meetings was four. One member resigned during the year.

Section Portland, Ore., met 11 times with attendance averaging four. There was no change in the composition of the section's membership.

Section Philadelphia admitted one new member and held 12 business meetings in 1994 with five to six members attending.

Section Seattle also admitted a new member in 1994. The average attendance at the 11 business meetings held was four.

Section Milwaukee reported the death of one member in 1994. Eleven business meetings were held, with three to four members present.

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It should be mentioned that several sections experienced problems electing officers and committees for the 1994 term

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of office, and that similar problems recurred when it came time to elect officers and committees for the 1995 term. As shown in the preceding summary, three sections failed to elect a delegate to the National Convention. A further indication of how widespread problems of this kind are throughout the Party may be gathered from the fact that only nine sections reported the election of an alternate delegate to the convention.

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The year-end summary of membership changes is reported to the NEC as a matter of course. When acknowledging receipt of the summary mailed last January, NEC Member George S. Taylor responded by saying that he found the information it contained “disturbing.” He went on to observe that the “total membership continues to shrink” despite the efforts his own and other sections have made to stimulate interest in the Party and attendance at their public meetings. “And even when someone writes or phones us indicating an interest in joining,” he added, “that interest never culminates in new membership, nor do they begin to attend any of our activity here.”

NEC Member Angeline Kleist had something similar to say after reading Comrade Taylor’s letter:

The problem of getting people to attend our public meetings . . . is one that needs to be explored,” she replied. “Attendance at Section Milwaukee’s public meetings has been extremely small. Even persons who by phone, letter and postal card said they would attend failed to do so. It might be well for NEC members of a section to encourage their sections to discuss this matter and if some new ideas are generated the sections should be encouraged to prepare a resolution for the National Convention’s consideration.

No such resolution was received from Section Milwaukee, Section Philadelphia, Section Cook Co., or Section Portland, to which NEC members belong. Coincidentally, however, something similar to what Comrade Kleist had in mind was received from Section San Francisco Bay Area, and the letter reporting the section’s recommendations has been appended to the “General Activities” section of this report for the convention’s consideration.

In my own response to Comrade Taylor’s letter I agreed

that the year-end report on membership changes was troubling.

However [I added], anyone who has followed along since my report to the 1987 National Convention can't be surprised by them, or by the proportional increase in the membership-at-large. For that matter, anyone who has followed along since the 1973 NEC Session, or the 1976 National Convention, can't be surprised by the general trend.

So, again we come up against what Marx said in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*:

“ . . . Proletarian revolutions . . . criticize themselves constantly; constantly interrupt themselves in their own course; come back to what seems to have been accomplished, in order to start over anew; scorn with cruel thoroughness the half measures, weaknesses and meanesses of their first attempts”; etc.

What this means in our present circumstances, specifically, I am not prepared to say—except that we have not “constantly interrupted” ourselves to assess our missteps and shortcomings, much less “scorn with cruel thoroughness,” etc. What I do know, however, is that it is not enough to acknowledge that we must have made mistakes in the past, distant and not so distant. It is not enough to identify those mistakes and absorb their import, or even to set a new course by adopting new methods and new attitudes towards old ones that, when they don't pan out, become just another set of old ones. We have to go through that process constantly.

We don't have much left to work with, so whatever the points of self-criticism that need to be identified and met “with cruel thoroughness” today, we had best identify and do something about them, and do it quick. There is no more time for generalities, such as these.

I don't want to create or leave the impression that Comrades Taylor and Kleist are the only NEC members who have expressed concern on these matters. A considerable correspondence with all NEC members participating has developed on this and other questions—so much so that it has led to another concern expressed by NEC Member Donna Bills, namely that the correspondence was so voluminous at times that it seemed to impede on other national office concerns. More of that correspondence would have been included here had time allowed for it to be reviewed, organized and fit together in a logical fashion. Nonetheless, it is important that the membership knows that its NEC has been active and is alive to all of these problems.

It probably is not necessary to suggest that the problems the Party has at the section and national headquarters levels have contributed something to the related problem of attracting and integrating new membership into the organiza-

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tion. Shortly after it became necessary to suspend *The People* last year, for example, I received a letter from a new national member-at-large, who has since resigned. At the time of his letter, however, he seemed to hold promise, and though he obviously was not well acquainted with the Party's recent history, he at least had enough initiative to express his interest and concern.

After stating that he had just received the general letter announcing that *The People* had been suspended, he said:

It seems that the SLP is in some trouble with regards to staff and funds. I find the report, the letter and the explanations to the problems in particular very disturbing.

Reading through the report and your letter, I grew increasingly uncomfortable with the explanation as to why *The People* is being suspended: "We are understaffed." This may be true, but with all due respect Mr. Bills, you are refusing to ask exactly why the SLP's national office is understaffed. The answer to me seems quite simple: there are so few people associated with the SLP. This indicates a problem from within.

I find the problem as being our lack of aggression in acquiring new members. I understand that the SLP is not particularly keen on the idea of "recruiting," but general party philosophy is in no danger in conjunction with the concept. The same democratic and socialist ideals can still apply. The simple truth is that the SLP is in a state of affairs that requires a change in the . . . policy. To effectively promote the SLP's ideas, we need, without question, a more broad membership base. An increase in membership would additionally mean an increase in the Party's funds, which in turn would yield a greater, more significant role in this society for the SLP. At present, we, the SLP, are failing and are headed for submission.

While all of this seemed a bit like saying that a drink of water is what the body needs to slacken its thirst, it also struck me as characteristic of a line of dead-end reasoning I have encountered before in discussions on the Party's problems: "We don't have enough members to solve our problems. Therefore, we must have more members." In this particular case, however, the idea that the Party "isn't keen on the idea of 'recruiting'" and somehow has erected barriers against adding new membership as a matter of policy needed an answer. The following is taken from what I wrote in answer to that member's—now former member's—letter:

Your thoughts on the problems the Party is faced with at present are much appreciated. It is gratifying to know that new members such as yourself are giving these problems serious consideration, and I would

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encourage you to continue. At the same time, however, I believe you have overlooked certain things and misinterpreted certain others.

For example: No effort was made to explain the headquarters problem to the NEC in Regular Session last April, or even last January when the NEC met in Special Session. No effort was made to explain it for the reason that it would have been redundant and superfluous for an informed NEC and membership. An intermittent debate on this and many related questions—including questions pertaining to membership recruitment—has been going on within the SLP since at least 1976, and the vast majority of the membership is well acquainted with it. As background you may wish to consider ordering copies of the published proceedings of past National Conventions from the New York Labor News. For your convenience, I am enclosing a catalogue and order form.

I don't believe that the SLP is in any danger of losing potential membership to the CP or SWP, at least none worth concerning ourselves about. People who decide to join organizations simply because they are "discouraged" or "angered" are acting emotionally, rather than intelligently, and experience shows that such individuals don't last very long in any organization.

The SLP is anything but reluctant to recruit new members, but we want members who know the difference between the CP, the SWP and the SLP. People who join organizations they don't understand frequently end up blaming the organizations they join for their misunderstanding of it. They don't last long in any organization, and any effort at recruiting them is akin to scooping up water with a bottomless bucket. The CP and SWP do that kind of thing, apparently in the expectation that a few drops will stick to the sides of their bucket, particularly if they grease the sides up a little with reformist or opportunistic "demands" specifically designed to appeal to the emotions. I had something similar to this in mind when writing the introduction to my report to the 41st National Convention, held in May 1993. I am including a portion here because it touches on the larger question that has been the subject of the intermittent debate mentioned above.

Having inserted what I wanted to draw to this former member's attention, I concluded by adding:

Now, you may agree or disagree with any or all of the preceding. The point, however, is that these questions have been discussed, and the discussion will continue, provided we are able to rally and resolve the immediate crisis in one way or another.

In response to this exchange, NEC Member Bernard Bortnick wrote:

His [the member's] conclusion [that] "this seems to indicate a problem from within" calls to mind the soul searching that has gone on within the SLP regarding our declining membership—gone on for years. Whereas a certain amount can be attributed to mistaken policies and political positions, abstentionism and all of that . . . discussed and argued over the past 15 years, Marx's statement that, "Only the economic organization can set on foot the political party of labor and thus raise a

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bulwark against the power of capital,” is the primary answer. The collapse of the union movement even though faked, and along with it the diminishing heavy industrial work force, and those industries themselves, have had a deadly effect on us. Couple that with the centrifugal pull of the working class to the suburbs, television and a whole pattern of life focused on fragmenting the working class, this has all militated against our movement. I had discussions with the late Comrade Joseph Pirincin, one of the most commanding figures the Party produced, and also one of the keenest minds, asking him to offer reasons why his presence, agitation, exposure in Cleveland for those many years he lived there failed to produce a movement and a strong section in Cleveland. He seemed, despite his keen intellect and easy repartee, unable to satisfactorily answer the question.

Pursuing this with Comrade Bortnick and the other members of the NEC, I responded, in part, as follows:

If my reading of your reaction to . . . is correct, your understanding of our Party-building problems is similar to my own. For example: I do not believe that the legacy of “abstentionism” from the Petersen era offers much of an explanation for the SLP’s isolation from the working class or the class struggle. I think it is the other way around: that abstentionism, as a policy, flowed out of the isolation that was, for lack of a better word, imposed on the SLP after 1908.

However, that still leaves open the question of why the SLP is in as bad a shape as it is . . . After all, regardless of why the SLP is isolated, or why it fell into abstentionism, there are still hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of people around who know what the SLP is, and who, if asked, would say they are in “substantial agreement” with it. The real question is: Why won’t those people, or at least an appreciable number of them, take the decisive step? You and I and all the others who have joined the SLP over the years cannot be all that unique in our ability to reason ourselves to the conclusion we reached when we decided to apply for membership. (I tried to raise a similar question for discussion in the introduction to my report to the 1993 National Convention, but the delegates failed to pick up on it.)

If the answer is somehow linked to abstentionism and/or isolation, whether as deliberate policy or as the result of being outmaneuvered by the reformist SP and by the AFL, etc. (aided by historical circumstances, rather than by superior judgment or “generalship”), the connections should be explored for by the NEC. We cannot undo what has already been done, but we should be able to explore this hypothesis sufficiently to determine if that is the source of, or provides a partial explanation for, our Party-building problems. Even if the conclusion is that our problems stem from other sources, it is still necessary to start the search somewhere if we ever hope to hit on the right answer and turn things around.

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For whatever the information might contribute to the deliberations of the convention in coming to grips with this

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particular set of problems, I am including the following factual summaries:

First—Between January 1, 1990, and December 31, 1994—a period of five years—the following changes took place in the composition and distribution of the sections and the membership.

The period began with 17 sections. One was organized, but it was one of four disbanded during the same period. A total of 60 new members were admitted, 19 by the sections and 41 by the NEC. However, there was a net loss of 65 members over the five-year span. Fifty-five members died, 55 were dropped for nonpayment of dues, 11 resigned, and four were expelled.

Concentrating solely on new members admitted, and going back 10 years, national office records provide the following information:

Second—From January 1, 1985, through December 31, 1994, the SLP admitted a total of 155 new members. More than 72 percent of that number—112 members—were admitted by the NEC as national members-at-large. There had not been a single year since before 1985 that the sections admitted as many as 10 members in any given year.

Of the 155 members admitted during the last 10 years, 20 were removed from the membership list before completing their first year of membership, and 72—nearly half the total—were removed within two years. Ninety-seven of the 155 were removed at some point, while 58 of all members admitted during the 1985–1994 period are still members today. Seventeen of the members admitted since January 1, 1985, were admitted by sections and the other 41 were admitted as members-at-large. Ironically—or so it seems to me—members-at-large admitted during that period were only slightly less likely to stay members for an appreciable length of time than those admitted by sections. The 17 members who were added by sections and remain with the Party today represent about 40 percent of the 43 members added by sections over the last 10 years, while the 41 members-at-large represent about 37 percent of the 112 members added by the NEC.

Incidental to this, it was also Comrade Bortnick who wrote to say that he found himself “wondering more about the na-

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tional members-at-large than I [he] do about members in the sections. Generally, I believe they are for the most part the younger members of the Party and therefore a potential source of energy and strength for the organization. Yet how to get some cohesion going remains baffling”

Comrade Bortnick also noticed that the number of leaflets shipped to members-at-large that month exceeded the number shipped to sections. That was an aberration, however, as the distribution figures included under “General Activities” show. However, in my answer to Comrade Bortnick I did want to stress that whatever real potential members-at-large have for building up the SLP, the SLP is still an organization of sections, and that the health, vitality and future of the Party ultimately depend on the health, vitality and future of the sections. Or, as I wrote to Comrade Bortnick:

You may be right about members-at-large being younger on average than the section membership. I haven’t looked into that lately. Bringing some organizational cohesion to a few dozen people scattered over the 3,000,000 square miles of the 48 contiguous states is too big a bite for me to chew. I don’t think there is any direct answer to that problem. If there is an indirect answer it is tied up with resuming publication and building up the sections . . . We need a paper that can teach its readers—including these isolated young members—what the SLP is all about and why it is worth their dedication and hard work, and we need to make progress in building up the local organizations. The only way we can hope to keep these new and isolated members is by demonstrating that they are members of something that actually exists.

We need a paper, a staff, some constructive activity in the sections, some new literature, some good publicity—and money. Coming up with those things should be enough to keep all of us busy for awhile.

Membership Changes (1994)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>Admit</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Drop</u>	<u>Resign</u>	<u>Expel</u>	<u>Transfers</u>		<u>Net</u>
						<u>In</u>	<u>Out</u>	
1. Los Angeles	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	- 3
2. Sacramento	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	+ 1
3. S.F. Bay Area	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	- 2
4. Dade Co.	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	- 4
5. St. Petersburg	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
6. Cook Co.	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	- 2
7. Wayne Co.	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	- 1
8. Minneapolis	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
9. N.Y. City	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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<u>Sections</u>	<u>Admit</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Drop</u>	<u>Resign</u>	<u>Expel</u>	<u>Transfers</u>		<u>Net</u>
						<u>In</u>	<u>Out</u>	
10. Akron	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11. Cleveland	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	- 1
12. Portland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13. Philadelphia	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	+ 1
14. Seattle	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	+ 1
15. Milwaukee	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	- 1
Subtotals	4	5	3	4	0	2	5	-11
16. MALs	9	4	4	2	1	4	1	+ 1
Totals	13	9	7	6	1	6	6	-10

On motion, the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

General Activities

Leaflets—Sections and members of the SLP ordered 102,030 leaflets for shipment in 1994. In return, the national office received reports on a total distribution of 106,128 leaflets during the year.

The sections ordered 74,925 of the 102,030 leaflets shipped to members, and they reported distributing 87,704 of the 106,128 leaflets distributed. Only one section failed to report any distribution, and only 19 members-at-large devoted some effort to this important work. The distribution reported by members-at-large was 18,424.

Besides the 102,030 leaflets shipped to sections and members, shipments of 80,175 leaflets went to a number of SLP sympathizers. More than 66,000 of that number went to one individual—Michael Preston of Buffalo, N.Y. Mr. Preston is a former member whose sympathy for the SLP apparently has not waned and whose capacity for doing the Party's work seems not to have diminished.

Mixed in with last year's total of 182,205 leaflets shipped were 47,520 sent to the Party's corps of monthly leaflet distributing volunteers. There were 35 monthly leaflet volunteers as of Dec. 31, 1994, of whom 15 were Party members and 20 Party sympathizers.

From these numbers it can be seen that SLP sympathizers

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accounted for a large part of last year's leaflet distribution. That is encouraging, of course, and if the time could be reserved for it, a greater effort would be made to stimulate their activity and to draw them closer to the Party in other ways.

However, it is also difficult to understand how a handful of Party sympathizers could distribute almost as many leaflets as all SLP sections combined. The least that can be said about this is that the membership is capable of distributing many more leaflets than they did last year, and that if they cannot be motivated to increase their efforts sympathizers are bound to take note of it, and their own enthusiasm will suffer. That is something the SLP simply cannot afford to see happen. The body of contacts and sympathizers the membership has built up represents the future of the organization, and if the membership fails to set a good example when it comes to conducting the Party's agitation it can only go to undermine all the other good work that the membership does.

In this connection, a few members have written to the national office to suggest that leaflet distribution has declined because of certain cautions contained in the *SLP Civil Liberties Guide*. One member buttressed his objection to one of those cautions by enclosing a news clipping in which it was mentioned that during last year's congressional elections religious groups having a political agenda were placing their leaflets on cars parked in church parking lots. The message was: If they do it, why shouldn't we?

The Party [I replied] has instructed its sections and members not to place SLP literature in or on cars for the same reason members ought not to slip leaflets into women's purses or men's pockets: they are private property. If Christian Coalition "pamphlets were slipped onto car windshields in church parking lots" it was probably with the knowledge and concurrence of sympathetic pastors and their quailing flocks. The article you sent suggests as much. Indeed, similar stories from around the country were reported throughout the recent election campaign by the print and electronic media. The distributors risked nothing. If they had done the same thing in the parking lots of grocery stores and shopping centers they might have received a much different reception, depending on the sympathies of those who own or manage them.

The *SLP Civil Liberties Guide*, page 2, says "many cities and towns have ordinances expressly forbidding the practice" If you or the section are truly interested in distributing leaflets to cars the first thing

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to do is determine what laws or ordinances [your city] . . . and other nearby towns and cities have. If the section finds that there are none it may then decide to run the risk. If such restrictions do exist, however, the section must be prepared to face any possible consequences alone and without the backing of the national office. The SLP clearly cannot be expected to counsel its members, its subdivisions or its friends to ignore or violate laws or, even in the absence of such local restrictions, constitutional protections that could result in legal and financial entanglements we can ill afford and are bound to lose.

Every one of those cars is owned by someone, most likely by a working man or woman. Laws and rules aside, the SLP will gain infinitely more respect by offering its leaflets directly to them than to their cars.

I sincerely hope this member was wrong when he suggested that the distribution of SLP leaflets has declined because of these cautions; or rather, I hope he was right, and that he and all others who appreciate the importance of leaflet distribution will do the necessary to boost their distribution.

The People—Sections and members-at-large reported a distribution of 32,922 copies of *The People* in 1994, or about half of the distribution reported in 1993. That was natural enough since *The People* was not published for five months. As shown above, however, the difference was not made up for by an increased distribution of leaflets.

Some sections and members-at-large are taking advantage of the free display tables that many public libraries set up for their patrons. After one member-at-large wrote to say he was placing a bundle at the local library, I replied:

Placing bundles of *The People* on the free literature tables more and more public libraries provide these days is an excellent thing to do. I know that members here in the [San Francisco] Bay Area have been doing the same thing in certain locations for sometime, and with the same kind of success that you mention

Sections and members who have not looked into this opportunity to place *The People* and leaflets where they can be taken by workers who patronize public libraries should do so.

Newsstands—The number of commercial newsstands carrying *The People* declined from 10 to seven during 1994, no doubt due in some measure to the suspension. There were 97 self-serve newsstands in operation on Jan. 1, 1994, and the members who operate and look after them did a remark-

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able job by getting 74 of them back into operation by year's end.

Under date of May 4, 1994, I wrote to all those who handle the Party's self-serve newsstands to ask their cooperation in removing them from the streets while the suspension was in effect. At the same time, it seemed appropriate to commend them for all the hard work they have poured into those newsstands, and the financial burden they have silently borne to keep them in shape over many years' time. It also strikes me as appropriate to insert a portion of that letter here:

Weekly People and *People* self-serve newsstands have been on the streets of some cities for well over 40 years. During that extended period, SLP members have performed a masterful job by keeping those newsstands operational, attractive and safe. They serviced them faithfully to make certain papers were always on display; they performed the maintenance and absorbed the cost of repairs; they endured the frustrations caused by vandalism and confiscation; they moved them, painted them, fitted them with new windows and parts whenever needed; they cut their fingers and scraped their arms so *The People* would be available to thousands of workers in cities across the country. They have done a thousand and one things, big and small, to keep those newsstands in operation, and for that they deserve the heartfelt thanks of all who recognize what they have achieved.

The NEC and the headquarters staff were deeply aware of all this when they came up against and found no way around the painful necessity of suspending publication. Unfortunately, those feelings were not enough to overcome the hardhearted array of disagreeably indifferent facts that made it necessary to suspend publication. However, no member who has devoted time and effort to the Party's self-serve newsstands should think that it was time and effort wasted, for nothing could be farther from the truth. Thousands upon thousands of working men and women have learned of the SLP through your efforts, and while those thousands have not come to the point where they feel compelled to act on the knowledge your efforts made possible, that time is sure to come.

* * * * *

With thanks and appreciation for all you have done in the past, and for your assistance and cooperation in this important matter.

Fraternally yours, etc.

Most sections were able to comply with this instruction. Section Sacramento could not, however, because 11 of its newsstands are fitted with heavy, cement bases that were installed years ago to prevent easy removal by vandals. They also proved to be too heavy for the members to remove and

store, and it was necessary to trust to luck that no untoward incident involving the empty stands occurred during the suspension period. Fortunately, there were no problems.

Shortly after publication resumed last November 12, the organizer of Section Los Angeles, Comrade Elizabeth Stanich, wrote the national office to explain that the member who usually attends to the section's stands was ill and could not put the section's four newsstands back into operation.

Comrade Karl Heck, organizer of Section Minneapolis, reported that the section's three stands were removed, but were not put back on the streets when publication resumed. However, the section reported placing 5,000 copies of *The People* at various locations (libraries, bookstores, etc.) during the year.

Section San Francisco Bay Area, which operates the largest number of self-serve newsstands of any section, also regularly places *The People* at 44 other outlets, namely libraries, bookstores, hotels, food stores, coffee shops, colleges, etc. A total of 12,200 papers were placed at these locations in 1994, with 10,300 copies being taken.

Last December I received a letter from Comrade George Taylor, organizer of Section Philadelphia, in which he wondered "if there are towns and cities where it would be possible to have a newsstand operation, if, of course, we have members or sympathizers who could do the servicing. May I suggest [that] a letter be sent to all sections and sympathizers who have subscriptions, especially if they have renewed."

In answer to this inquiry or suggestion, I wrote that "while there may be members in outlying areas who would be willing to service such stands if they were provided to them, I question if it would be wise to encourage isolated members in this way. We lose too many members-at-large and would have no way to get abandoned stands off the streets. That opens the door to a host of questions ranging from local ordinances to insurance liability problems that I am not prepared to contend with at present. Of course, commercial stands and free distribution tables at libraries don't present the same problems. Perhaps there are ways to stimulate members-at-large and sympathizers to make greater efforts in these areas."

Public Meetings—The sections and members-at-large

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reported that 96 public meetings were held in 1994. Thirty-two of these were fund-raisers. Four were public lectures and school appearances. Seven study class sessions and 53 discussion meetings were also held during the year.

The 96 public meetings reported in 1994 was substantially less than the 117 reported in 1993. While two sections failed to hold a single public meeting of any kind in 1993, four fell into that category in 1994.

Sections occasionally ask the national office if there are reasons why SLP public meetings should not be held in private homes, particularly after receiving invitations from sympathizers. In answer to one such inquiry last year, I replied:

. . . You reported that Ms. W offered to open her art studio for SLP discussion meetings without charge to the section, and asked if there was any reason why it might be unwise to accept her offer.

The national office generally discourages sections from accepting such offers for many reasons. The experience has been that people are no more likely to attend public meetings at private homes than they are to attend them at libraries, halls and other public places, and that many are reluctant to go into private homes for such reasons. More important, there have been instances of seemingly sympathetic people changing their minds and turning against the Party, occasionally in ways that have proven more than simple embarrassments. Using a private person's address on promotional material that urges contacts and People readers to attend also presents problems that Ms. W herself may not have considered. It is an unfortunate fact that public meetings frequently attract individuals who are less than desirable.

While the national office has tended to discourage sections from involving themselves in situations where the Party becomes dependent on the continued good will of individuals, it acknowledges that there can be and have been exceptions. Such exceptions only become evident in retrospect, however, and ultimately it is the section that must exercise its best judgment in such situations.

Literature Tables—Section Portland kept up its literature table at the weekly Saturday Market in that city from April until July. Comrade Sid Fink, who takes primary responsibility for this activity, was forced to suspend operations when he was taken ill. However, he has since recovered and is back in “business” this year.

Literature tables at local “flea markets,” “street fairs” and other places where crowds congregate are something that more sections should consider as a regular activity. The success Section Portland has had with its weekly table at the

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Saturday Market may be gathered from the following, written in response to a report from the section:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of December 16, with which you enclosed checks (2) totaling \$211. Thank you.

* * * * *

The . . . [second check] in the amount of \$151 represents proceeds from the social affair held December 11, and was intended for *The People*.

A special word of thanks and appreciation are due to your wife for the cooking and other preparations and work she did to make the affair a success. Please tell her that everything she did is deeply appreciated here, as I know it was by the luckier people who were present to enjoy what she prepared.

I was pleased and impressed by the attendance of 14, including five contacts gained from your Saturday Market literature displays. The interest the latter group expressed in attending a regular discussion group is encouraging, and I hope you will be able to oblige them in the near future.

Fair Booths—Section Minneapolis cooperated with members in Wisconsin to set up an SLP booth at the Barron County, Wisconsin, County Fair. A report on this activity was printed in the *SLP Newsletter*.

Contacts—The national office received 379 inquiries last year, a drop of 76 from 1993. Of the 379 inquiries received, 108 were from leaflet coupons, 32 were from coupons clipped from *The People*, 10 from ads placed with other publications, 15 from SLP literature table sign-up sheets and 107 from miscellaneous sources. The remainder—also 107—came from students and teachers.

Of the 108 individuals who sent in leaflet coupons to ask for free information, 74 also subscribed to *The People* at the same time. A total of 112 subscriptions were entered from contact sources, and eight contacts enclosed a dollar for 100 leaflets.

Membership Information Packets—Last year, the national office mailed out 162 “membership pitch” letters to renewing subscribers. Twenty-five readers replied and asked to receive the membership information packet. Five other readers requested the packet at their own initiative.

Of the 13 members admitted last year, seven received the letter and asked to receive the packet. Of those seven, six were later admitted to membership by the NEC and one by

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Section Los Angeles.

Last December, however, a decision was made to stop mailing these letters to renewing subscribers. The main reason was that the present national office staff is not able to keep track of literature orders by readers of *The People*. Without that information, it is virtually impossible to make intelligent decisions on which readers may be prepared for membership and which are not. Unfortunately, this and other problems have been exacerbated since last November by an unavoidable shifting of work assignments and priorities at the headquarters. It is one of the many penalties being paid because of the staffing problem.

*

The general decline in activity in 1993 and 1994 invites comparison to what was achieved three years ago, during the *1992 Campaign for Socialism*. Every thoughtful member of the Party has probably compared the results of that effort to what was reported for 1993 at last year's Regular NEC Session. Section San Francisco Bay Area certainly did, and then it went on to adopt the following, dated May 24, 1995, which I include here for consideration by this convention:

Dear Comrade Bills:

At a recent meeting of Section San Francisco Bay Area's Agitation Committee much of the committee's thoughts and discussion was devoted to the question of what steps we might take to improve the response of workers to the Party's revolutionary message. Of particular concern was declining attendance, not only at the section's regular business meetings but, in particular, at the section's public affairs—discussion groups, social affairs, public lectures, etc.

It was recalled by the committee that the last time there had been an increase in interest in our general activities and our program was during the presidential election of 1992. That year, in an effort to take advantage of the increased interest in political and economic matters that usually occurs during a presidential election year, the Party launched its campaign efforts and activities under the banner, "Campaign for Socialism."

That "Campaign for Socialism" had a marked effect on the activities of Section San Francisco Bay Area, and we believe of other sections as well. In short, giving the 1992 campaign a definite theme evoked a positive response not only from the section's membership but from sympathizers and contacts too. Morale was heightened and, in part, was reflected in more energetic activities, better planned and carried out. The result was a degree of improvement in attendance at our public affairs.

On the basis of this experience and related considerations, the Agitation Committee proposed to the section that it recommend to the na-

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tional office and the NEC the adoption of a specific theme to its activities in the forthcoming 1996 national election campaign. The section concurred in principle with the committee's general views and recommendation, and decided to submit the following suggestions for developing for the Party's 1996 campaign activities through the national office to the upcoming National Convention.

Taking into account the fact that the host of serious problems that have confronted our nation and created so much turmoil, misery and human suffering for decades not only remain unsolved, but are steadily growing worse; and further taking into account the fact that the workers keep looking to ever new groups of politicians for relief from their misery, taking still further into account that even the politicians and the plutocracy they serve are themselves growing more desperate and ruthless in their efforts to preserve their jungle system and maintain their favored position as exploiters of the working class, we believe the time is long past due when we must seek and find ways and means of bringing our class to a realization that it will find no answers to the massive social and economic problems that confront it; that it will find no saviors who can or will relieve, let alone end, their miseries or slow their continued sinking into an ever lower state of degradation among those who seek either to reform or simply preserve as is the corrupt and corrupting capitalist system. We must find ways to convince ever greater numbers of workers that if the problems threatening to hurl the nation into a new dark ages, during which the workers will reap the bulk of the new hardships and suffer the worst of its afflictions, are to be solved permanently the working class alone has the latent power for doing so.

In short, we believe we should organize our 1996 campaign efforts around a clarion call for the workers of America to awake to the realization that they, and they alone, constitute the hope of the nation for a sane, safe and affluent America that can and will set the example for the rest of the workers of the world. We have not come up with a slogan or rallying cry that would crystallize the campaign, nor are we as yet able to offer a concrete set of plans for such a campaign. We hope the collective wisdom of the delegates will be able to do much of that. In the meantime our section will continue to give careful thought to the plan we suggest and any concrete suggestions that result from our efforts will be forwarded to the national office for possible referral to the National Convention. We hope the national office will see enough merit in the proposal outlined above to refer it to the National Convention, either as part of your report with whatever modifications you see fit, or as a separate communication to the assembled convention delegates, or in whatever other manner you see fit and proper.

Fraternally submitted,

DONNA BILLS
Organizer

I was not able to respond to the section's letter or give it the thought it deserves. However, what the section said about the *1992 Campaign for Socialism* is correct. When summing up that effort in my report to the National Conven-

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tion in 1993, I said:

The *1992 Campaign for Socialism* was a successful undertaking for the SLP because we accomplished most of what we set out to accomplish. We set specific goals for the national office, *The People* and the membership—and we achieved most of them. We did not set what we knew would be unattainable goals, because we knew that failure would only dampen our spirits and compound our problems. However, neither did we set goals that were below our potential, that wouldn't require an effort, or would be greeted with "ho-hum" derision. Had we done that there would have been no risk of failure, and without that element of risk there would be no chance to reap the reward of a success that had to be striven for and, if successfully striven for, yield the greater dividend we were after—a Partywide sense of accomplishment; a building of our confidence; a lasting enthusiasm to propel us on after the campaign was over and done with. We set what we believed were realistic goals, worthy of our potential, yet tempered by the realization that there was some stiffness in the Party's joints and some cotton in its mind. We needed to stretch those muscles and exercise that mind to prove to ourselves that we still know how to do things and how to do them right. And we did.

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Leaflet Distribution (1993–1994)			
<u>Sections</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Los Angeles, Calif.	1,465	3,735	5,200
Sacramento, Calif.	12,820	11,415	24,235
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	3,733	4,955	8,688
Dade County, Fla.	556	0	556
St. Petersburg, Fla.	3,833	1,200	5,033
Cook Co., Ill.	18,000	9,875	27,875
Wayne Co., Mich.	2,786	1,961	4,747
Minneapolis, Minn.	7,500	12,650	20,150
New York City	1,000	0	1,000
Akron, Ohio	0	4,400	4,400
Cleveland, Ohio	4,983	6,954	11,937
Portland, Ore.	350	393	743
Philadelphia, Pa.	25,305	25,105	50,410
Seattle, Wash.	200	20	220
Milwaukee, Wis.	4,300	5,041	9,341
<u>Members-at-Large</u>	<u>17,468</u>	<u>18,424</u>	<u>35,892</u>
Totals	104,299	106,128	210,427

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Distribution of *The People* (1993–1994)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Los Angeles, Calif.	910	75	985
Sacramento, Calif.	2,495	955	3,450
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	7,942	3,570	11,512
Dade Co., Fla.	500	0	500
St. Petersburg, Fla.	5,105	1,998	7,103
Cook Co., Ill.	11,358	423	11,781
Wayne Co., Mich.	2,000	0	2,000
Minneapolis, Minn.	5,945	5,930	11,875
New York City	0	0	0
Akron, Ohio	18,000	9,300	27,300
Cleveland, Ohio	5,415	3,300	8,715
Portland, Ore.	1,645	740	2,385
Philadelphia, Pa.	1,683	1,119	2,802
Seattle, Wash.	1,150	650	1,800
Milwaukee, Wis.	3,540	2,626	6,166
<u>Members-at-Large</u>	<u>4,314</u>	<u>2,236</u>	<u>6,550</u>
Totals	72,002	32,922	104,924

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Sections	Fund- Raisers	Publ./School Lectures	Study Classes	Disc. Groups
Los Angeles	0	0	0	0
Sacramento	0	1	0	0
SF Bay Area	4	0	0	10
Sacramento/SFBA	2	0	0	0
St. Petersburg	0	1	0	9
Cook Co.	0	2	0	0
Wayne Co.	12	0	0	0
Minneapolis	0	0	0	21
Mpls/Duluth SLP Grp.	2	0	0	0
New York City	0	0	0	0
Akron	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	0	0	3	3
Akron/Cleveland	7	0	0	0
Portland	1	0	0	2
Philadelphia	4	0	4	4
Seattle	0	0	0	0
Milwaukee	0	0	0	4
<u>Mbrs-at-Large</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTALS	32	4	7	53

Note: From April through July, 1994, Section Portland maintained a literature table each weekend at a local Saturday Market.

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Sources	Contacts		Totals
	1993	1994	
Leaflets	148	108	256
Miscellaneous	110	107	217
Ads in <i>The People</i>	61	32	93
Ads in Other			
Publications	25	10	35
Requests for Campaign Literature	1	0	1
Local Fliers	6	0	6
Students/Teachers	102	107	209
Sign-up Sheets (From SLP Literature Tables)	0	15	15
Radio/TV	0	0	0
N.O. Mailing to Contacts & Former Subs	2	0	2
Totals	455	379	834

Subscriptions From Contacts

	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Four months	98	78	176
One Year	35	29	64
Two Years	0	4	4
Three Years	1	1	2
<u>Bundle Subs</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Totals	134	112	246
Subs From Leaflet Coupons	93	74	167
Leaflet Orders From Leaflet Coupons	10	8	18

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On motion, the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

At 12:45 p.m., a motion to recess until 1:30 p.m. was not concurred in. At 12:50 p.m., a five-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 12:55 p.m.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

Party Press and Literature

The People is mailed to readers and libraries in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and internationally to 19 countries¹ on six continents. Press runs for the 1993–1994 fiscal year² averaged 11,500 copies, and the average of 2,902 mail subscriptions and 8,001 copies mailed or shipped in bundles put the average of paid circulation at 10,903 copies. Special issues, and the extra number of each printed during the same period, included the 1993 De Leon issue (5,434), the 1994 Paris Commune issue (3,583) and the 1994 May Day issue (4,368). Labor Day and Youth issues were not printed because the publication dates fell within the suspension period, which ran from May through October 1994.

Working from the issue of April 22, 1995, the paid circulation at present may be broken down as follows:

Domestic Subs	2,804
Foreign Subs	112
Domestic Bundles	6,911
<u>Foreign Bundles</u>	<u>426</u>
Total	10,243

Included in the preceding figures are 389 libraries in the United States, two of which receive bundles, and 10 libraries in other countries.

¹Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

²The fiscal year covered by the mandatory annual Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30 of the following year. *The People* publishes its annual statement in the second issue in October.

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Last year, the subscription department processed 427 new and 74 “old-new” subscriptions, for a total of 501 subscriptions. The primary sources for new subscriptions were: national office contacts, 101; Christmas and other gift subscriptions, 92; free four-month trials ordered by renewing subscribers, 73; ads appearing in other publications, 63; coupons from *The People*, 39; and the sections and members-at-large, 14. The other 45 new subscriptions came from miscellaneous sources. Eight hundred forty-six new subscriptions were added in 1993, a figure to which I will return in a moment.

Here may be the place to note that, starting with the issue of December 24, 1994, *The People* entered the “information revolution” by going “on line.” The contents of each new issue are routinely “uploaded” onto the Internet and deposited into the LaborNet within two days of publication. Computer owners connected to the Internet can now communicate with or subscribe to *The People* through this electronic medium. There is no charge to those who subscribe by this method to have the contents of each issue routed directly to their electronic or e-mail addresses. *The People* had 50 e-mail subscribers as of the April 22 issue. Unfortunately, there is no way to determine where on the map these electronic subscribers really live.

Fifty-five members from 13 of the 14 sections, and 26 national members-at-large, received regular bundles, as of the April 22 issue. These bundle shipments ranged anywhere in size from five copies for a single bundle to the 2,175 copies shipped in 12 bundles to Section San Francisco Bay Area. They also accounted for 5,959 of the 7,340 copies shipped in bundles.

Sixty-five additional bundles, totaling 955 copies, were shipped to sympathizers and others who consider *The People* a worthy publication, and to five commercial addresses. Five bundles were shipped to other countries and accounted for the balance of 426 copies. Section Vancouver of the Canadian SLP accounts for most bundle copies shipped to other countries.

Last October, when writing to inform the readership that publication would resume in November, the following brief appeal was included:

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The best advertising for *The People*, and for the program and principles of the SLP, is the active support they receive from readers just like you. By receiving and distributing a bundle of five or more copies of every issue, you can help bring the SLP's message to many more working men and women than more conventional means of advertising can reach. Bundle subscription rates are modest, but the return on your "investment" will be of inestimable value.

The response was gratifying. Today, about 46 percent of all bundles go to nonmember readers.

No effort was made to promote *The People* by advertising in other periodicals last year, primarily because of the precarious conditions under which it was and continues to be published. The last of our classified ads appeared in December 1993, and all new subscriptions traceable to that source and received since then came from back issues of the publications in which our ads were carried. Ninety-two subscriptions that could be traced to ads came due for expiration in 1994, of which 35 renewed. Most of those renewals (20) were for one year, four were for two years and nine were for three years. The renewal rate for this particular group of subscriptions was 38 percent.

The decline in the number of new subscriptions processed in 1994, when compared to 1993 and some earlier years, was due largely to this lack of advertising. Almost 23 percent of the 846 new subscriptions received in 1993 could be traced to classified ads. New ads have been written, but will not be placed until a final decision on continuing publication is reached.

Leaflets—A total of 145,000 leaflets were printed in 1994, as follows:

"Child Labor Still America's Shame"	25,000
"Racism, Why It's Still With Us"	25,000
"A Dismal Future for America's Workers"	25,000
"Politicians Promise and Things Get Worse . . . WHY?"	35,000
"Why America Needs Industrial Democracy"	35,000

The first three listed were printed as one-time-only leaflets with no plan to add them to the Party's regular stock. The other two were printed after the headquarters were moved.

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Supplies of several stock leaflets are nearing depletion and decisions must soon be made on reprinting or retiring them from circulation. A few could possibly survive revision and updating, but the real need is for timely new leaflets. Unfortunately, there has been no time to deal with this problem in a systematic way.

National office supplies of the brochure, "Socialist Labor Party: Position & Program," are exhausted. This particular problem was brought to the NEC's attention in March, and several NEC members offered a number of helpful suggestions. Here again, however, the time needed to act on these suggestions or to develop other new ideas for updating or replacing the brochure has not been available. In the meantime, and to help fill in the void, the national office has printed "The Socialist Program, What It Is and How It Developed," on a large, four-page format. The center section of this new leaflet is taken up by the Socialist Industrial Union chart, and the text is taken from the pamphlet *Unionism: Fraudulent or Genuine?* and other sources. All this material was combined and printed in the December 24 issue of *The People*.

Books and Pamphlets—Seven booklets and pamphlets were printed or reprinted in 1994, as follows:

<i>Early Efforts at Socialist Unity</i>	500
<i>Earth Day or May Day: Two Views of the Future (new)</i>	500
<i>Is Cuba Socialist?</i>	1,000
<i>Nationalism: Working-Class Nemesis (new)</i>	1,000
<i>Stand Up and Be Counted (new)</i>	500
<i>The Great Depression</i>	1,000
<i>The History Behind the Holocaust</i>	1,000

Six of the booklets and pamphlets printed in 1994 were published under the *Socialist Studies* rubric. Excepting the three *Socialist Studies* identified as such, no new pamphlets were published during the year. However, the method used to set the type and format the pages for the new edition of *The Great Depression* represented something of a breakthrough for the New York Labor News.

The entire text of the old edition of this regular pamphlet

was first scanned into a computer by the editorial department's OCR scanner. It was then reformatted in the national office entirely by word processing, as distinct from more sophisticated desktop publishing methods.

This capacity to electronically scan printed or cleanly typed matter into a computer for editing, formatting, font selection, annotating, indexing and most other steps involved in the preparation of printed matter by simple word processing opens the door on many publishing possibilities and brings a much greater flexibility to the Labor News than could have been imagined a few years ago.

What this technology does not and cannot do, of course, is decide what and how to edit, format, annotate, or index. It does what it is told, does it well, and for that very reason is a source of continual frustration. Having the technical and mechanical means to produce attractive literature quickly and with great efficiency, but lacking the time and the staff needed to take full advantage of them, has sidetracked or derailed a number of publishing projects.

Eight important pamphlets, some of which are out of print, are stalled at various stages of preparation for publication. The list has been reported before, and need not be repeated here. The point is that most are either out of print, or the remaining stock is so old that their appearance does the SLP no credit and the value of their texts is diminished by introductions and other supplementary material conceived, written, printed and inextricably tied to the past—to the Cold War era, and in some cases, to the pre-Cold War world.

The seven publications listed above were each printed in small editions of 500 to 1,000 copies. The decision to print in small numbers was a deliberate one. There were several reasons for this. In part, it was because storage space is at a premium at the new headquarters. In part, it was because much of the space we have is taken up by antiquated literature that should be retired, replaced or updated and reissued in new editions. Primarily, however, the aim was to stretch the Party's printing dollar and to add more new titles and more variety to the New York Labor News catalogue. In addition, the hope was that a concerted effort could be made to promote and move this new literature at a faster pace.

Soon after the new edition of *The Great Depression* was

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printed, NEC Member George S. Taylor wrote and made the following observations and comments:

The new format [for the pamphlet], *The Great Depression*, is excellent, and so is the new preface by Comrade [Nathan] Karp.

I note that no price is indicated. You must have something special in mind. As for me, I hope we can come up with a plan on how to use it most effectively, especially in an effort at rebuilding the membership. I suggest that the agenda for the coming [1994] regular session of the NEC include a plan for how to use it, as well as other specially selected literature that should be considered for reissue in a new format, and I especially have in mind our continuing need for a pamphlet on Socialist Industrial Unionism; the pamphlet on fraudulent and genuine unionism; and suitable articles from *The People* attacking the present unions; and, *Two Pages From Roman History*.

I agree, that having our excellent literature "sit on our shelves," either at national headquarters, or in sections' stock, does not serve our purpose, what with the capitalist crisis

Comrade Taylor was correct when speculating that I had "something special in mind," not for *The Great Depression* specifically, but for what I hoped might be done with a body of new or revised and reformatted literature. As I explained in reply:

By now you should have received the general letter of April 4, which somewhat belatedly "announced" the new pamphlet. Therein I inform the membership that the New York Labor News will be selling it for \$1.50.

The absence of a price on the cover did not stem from any special plan on my part. However, I was hoping that we would be able to bring out quality new editions of other SLP books and pamphlets to go along with it, and then to make a concerted effort to place them with independent bookstores around the country. Eventually, I still hope to do that, and to add the Bookland EAN bar code for electronic scanning. The code is also available in sticker form. Now that we have to move, however, those plans have had to move back onto the back burner again, where they've been simmering for sometime.

Whatever you have in the way of specific suggestions or recommendations for the NEC's consideration should be presented as motions or in some other appropriate way during the session. The agenda is always flexible, and can be added to or subtracted from as the NEC sees fit.

Yes, we do need a new pamphlet on Socialist Industrial Unionism. However, before we can even begin to think about it we need an editorial staff of one or two capable SLP men and/or women. We not only need the pamphlet, we need to review the SIU program itself to see how all this high tech automation, the rapid integration of the world market and the permanent displacement of millions of workers affect the program. At any rate, we certainly need to express it in terms that take all of these things into account.

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The new *Socialist Studies* also brought comments and observations from the NEC. Comrade Bernard Bortnick, for example, wrote:

I wish to “chime in” with the general approval of the new *Socialist Studies* format. It is certainly more compact and begins to resemble our depleted pamphlet stock with fresh material.

This suggested that perhaps some clarification was needed on what role I saw for *Socialist Studies*, as distinct from regular pamphlets, and where the material for them would come from. With that in mind, I replied as follows:

Thanks for “chiming in” where the new format for the *Socialist Studies* is concerned. So there is no misunderstanding, however, it is not “fresh material” I have in mind for this particular line of literature, but old material from back issues of *The People* and *Weekly People* (and possibly other, primarily SLP, sources) that has either been out of print and long forgotten, or that never made it to the pamphlet stage. Back issues of the paper provide a vast resource of material for useful articles on Marxist theory, the SLP’s program, and many illuminating articles on SLP history. There may not be a large “market” for any of this, but they can be utilized to show that the SLP has been an active and vibrant political organization for a very long time. That’s one reason why I’m so interested in short press runs for this series. I want variety.

For example: you have written at least two series of articles on the decline of the cities that I am aware of, and it had crossed my mind that you might be willing to either merge and recast them into something fresh, or achieve somewhat the same objective by preparing an introduction that would show where you were right (or wrong), where matters stand today, and where they are tending.

Works of Daniel De Leon—When the NEC met in April 1994, I reported that the job of typing De Leon’s works from the 1890s was nearing completion. I also reported that reading and copy editing from the *Daily People* files had reached into September 1900. Everything from the pre-1900 period is now stored on special computer disks, and typing is now complete through May 11, 1901.

This body of work covers the equivalent of 8,625 typewritten pages and comprises 3,150 separate works. De Leon’s editorials, speeches, debates and published letters, as well as many Letter Box answers, all the Uncle Sam & Brother Jonathan dialogues, some resolutions and a few miscellaneous items are included.

I cannot say when the copy editing and typing stages of

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preparing De Leon's works will be completed. Although most of this work is done at home over my morning coffee, my progress will obviously depend on how the headquarters situation develops. For now, however, I can report that copy editing in preparation for typing is complete through August 1903.

On motion, the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

Party Finances

I sincerely regret that I did not find time in which to put together a comprehensive report on the Party's finances. Anything less than that would be inadequate and possibly misleading. The annual financial statement has been prepared, however, and though time constraints have also prevented me from submitting it to the membership, it is available to the convention.

On motion, the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

NEC and National Officers

Last May I wrote to the members elected as delegates to this National Convention and, among other things, reminded them that two matters would automatically come before them. Those two matters are the nomination and election of seven members to the National Executive Committee for the 1995–1997 term of office, and the nomination and election of national officers for the same term of office.

A call issued to the sections and members-at-large for the names of members eligible under the Constitution, and otherwise qualified to warrant your consideration as members of the NEC, resulted in several names being submitted. Here I wish to remind you, however, that while you are obliged to give each of those names serious consideration, you are un-

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der no obligation to limit your final decision on the composition of the NEC to those who have indicated their willingness to serve. However, you do have an obligation to elect members who, in your judgment, are best suited and most likely to discharge the duties of NEC member in a manner that will serve the Party's interests. As I explained to the delegates assembled at the 1993 National Convention:

Eligibility under the Constitution, and a willingness to serve, are two indispensable considerations, and every member who has come forward . . . is to be commended for their willingness to take on the duties and responsibilities of membership on the NEC—particularly at this difficult juncture. At the same time, however, the eligibility requirements provided by the Constitution are only the starting point from which you must determine which among those who are eligible and willing are the most qualified to administer the Party's affairs. What you decide in that regard will set the standard for the next two years—years that could easily be crucial in determining the Party's future

To this I would only add that the seven members who composed the NEC for the 1993–1995 term of office deserve the Party's commendation for all the work they performed during an extraordinarily difficult period. Comrades Donna Bills, Bernard Bortnick, Henry Coretz, Sid Fink, Louis Fisher, Angeline Kleist and George S. Taylor more than fulfilled their basic duties as members of the NEC. They responded to every problem and every challenge the Party encountered with thoughtful, informed and intelligent counsel for the national office, and working closely with them has helped me in dealing with many problems that deserved, but could not receive, attention in this report.

The three national offices should also be filled, including the posts of Editor, Financial Secretary and National Secretary. Two of those offices—that of Editor and Financial Secretary—are vacant at this time, and the National Secretary's term of office expires with this convention.

On motion, the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

At 1:25 p.m., a motion was adopted to recess until 2:30 p.m.

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AFTERNOON SESSION, SATURDAY, JULY 15, 1995

The convention was called to order at 2:30 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported six members present in the audience.

Discussion of Sections of the National Secretary's Report

Discussion on the section "National Headquarters" began at 2:35 p.m.

At 4 p.m., a motion was passed to adjourn until 9 a.m., Sunday, July 16.

MORNING SESSION, SUNDAY, JULY 16, 1995

The convention was called to order at 9 a.m.

On roll call, all present.

The minutes of Saturday's sessions were approved as read.

The sergeant at arms reported six members present in the audience.

Discussion of Sections of the National Secretary's Report

At 9:08 a.m., discussion resumed on the section "National Headquarters." At 9:15 a.m., a motion was passed to proceed to discussion of the next section.

Discussion on the section "State of Organization" began at 9:16 a.m. and closed at 9:27 a.m.

A 10-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 10:52 a.m.

Discussion on the section "General Activities" began at 10:53 a.m. On motion, discussion on this section of the report ended at 11:27 a.m.

Discussion on the section "Party Press and Literature" immediately followed.

At 12:16 p.m., a five-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 12:35 p.m. Upon reconvening, a motion was passed to end discussion on this section of the report.

Discussion began on the section "Party Finances." At 12:50 p.m., a motion was passed to end discussion.

There was no discussion on the "NEC and National Officers" section of the National Secretary's report.

New Business

L. Figueroa presented the following resolution:

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1) Whereas, Puerto Rico plays a key role in the military schemes of United States imperialism. Among other things, Puerto Rico is considered:

a) An important link in the defense system of the Panama Canal;

b) A base of operations which facilitates possible military intervention in the Caribbean region and use to permanently intimidate neighboring peoples;

c) A control center for naval activities and protection of the merchant marine and Navy;

d) Location for all types of military training and testing site for the latest weaponry;

2) Whereas, My country is the center of a vast system of military installations and the central command for the entire Caribbean area and that of the South Atlantic. Furthermore, a great number of Puerto Ricans were recruited, and still are, to serve in all the wars where the United States has participated during this century. If postwar capitalism has been characterized by the militarization of the economies and societies that rotate around this empire, this process of militarization has been applied to Puerto Rico with a lot more intensity. Puerto Rico has been transformed by American imperialism in a danger for world peace and a danger for the sovereignty of their neighbors;

3) Whereas, The United States has over 10 military installations, covering an area of 100,000 acres, in an island not much more than 100 miles long by 35 miles wide;

4) Whereas, The military recruiting process in Puerto Rico is a process that does violence to the Puerto Rican people, where any young man of the age of 18 must register in the Selective Service of the United States. If not they will face prosecution with a sentence of five years in a federal prison;

5) Whereas, The United States military penetrates all aspects of Puerto Rican life and culture. In Puerto Rico, militarism is but the central component of the colonialist ideology. The National Guard not only penetrates Puerto Rican life through the activities of their members. They possess special squadrons for community relations. These squadrons provide support to a great number of organizations of paramilitary identity like, the Boys and Girls Scouts, the Civil Air Patrol, Crusaders for America and the Police Athletic League. The

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regular Army, the Navy and the Marines also support these youth organizations;

6) Whereas, The domination of the island by the United States goes beyond the military control. Exists today in Puerto Rico a bogus political system to hide the true and the historical fact that the island is a classic colony of the United States. This present political status is called the Free Associated State. It is not free, it exists under the Constitution and laws of the United States; it is not associated to anything or anyone, because it is a colony under absolute control by the United States. And we all know very well that it is not a state;

7) Whereas, The power over Puerto Rico by the United States has no limits. The United States determines who enters and leaves the island through their laws of immigration; It maintains on the island a federal court which process and prosecute Puerto Ricans under federal laws; It controls radio and television and we cannot build a station or send any signal without their approval. It censors books and art through their customs agencies. They control our commerce and our economy through economic monopoly. As of 1980, 85 percent of our economy was under control of the United States capitalists. It maintains an absolute and incredible control over marine and air commerce between the United States and Puerto Rico, overcharging us between 40 and 50 million dollars annually;

8) Whereas, It exclusively interferes in laws pertaining to bankruptcy, naturalization and citizenship. It maintains exclusive power over expropriation of our land and properties;

9) Whereas, The United States controls the sea and the air forms of transportation. Exclusively rules over foreign relations; The United States Congress has absolute control over the sugar industry. It will not permit Puerto Rican participation in the negotiation of commercial treaties with other countries that affect Puerto Rico; It controls currency and mail and establishes the fundamental norms which run the banking system;

10) Whereas, We have to agree that almost everything that directly or indirectly affects the life of the Puerto Rican people, is in the hands of the United States Congress. And while Puerto Rico continues to be militarily, economically

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and culturally occupied by the American Empire, it will be a fraud and a monstrosity, to allege that Puerto Rico enjoys self-determination;

Resolved, That the Puerto Rican community, and the Hispanic community in general, is approaching 30 million people. That it is imperative that the Socialist Labor Party, a party of the working class and for the working class, give its support to the working class of Puerto Rico, where its number is that of over 95 percent of the population;

Resolved, That the Party, through its official organ, *The People*, give its support for the right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence, as people need to be free and independent to be able to decide what economic and political system they wish to have, including socialism. Puerto Rico cannot be socialist if it is not free.

[Signed] LUIS FIGUEROA

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the resolution. A substitute motion passed referring the resolution to an appropriate committee when elected.

L. Figueroa presented the following resolution:

Whereas, Social and political symbols are important to any country, to any society and to any social and political organization; and

Whereas, They serve to represent a people or an idea, and to [be] able to identify under any situation, at any given place and time, the people or idea that they represent; therefore

Resolved, That the Socialist Labor Party should adopt the red flag with the arm and hammer place[d] in the center of the flag, as the official symbol of the Socialist Labor Party;

Resolved, That such symbol should be adopted by the Party and should be part of the Party's Constitution;

Resolved, That such symbol be visible in all the official activities of the Socialist Labor Party and be visible during all demonstrations and at a prominent location at the national office and at the office of all the sections of the Party.

[Signed] LUIS FIGUEROA

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the resolution. On motion, the resolution was referred to an appropriate

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committee when elected.

At 1:40 p.m., a motion was passed to recess for one hour.

AFTERNOON SESSION, SUNDAY, JULY 16, 1995

The convention was called to order at 2:53 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported seven members present in the audience.

Determination of Committees

A motion was adopted that four committees be elected as follows: Committee on National Headquarters to consist of five; Committee on Organization and Agitation to consist of five; Committee on Resolutions to consist of three; and Committee on Party Press and Literature to consist of three.

Referring Matters to Committees

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "National Head-quarters" was referred to the Committee on National Headquarters.

On motion, the National Secretary's reports on "State of Organization" and "General Activities" were referred to the Committee on Organization and Agitation.

On motion, the resolution on Puerto Rico was referred to the Committee on Resolutions.

On motion, the resolution on official symbol of the SLP was referred to the Committee on Resolutions.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "Party Press and Literature" was referred to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, the National Secretary's reports on "NEC and National Officers" and "Party Finances" were referred to the Committee on National Headquarters.

Election of Committees

Committee on National Headquarters (5): B. Bortnick, K. Heck, S. Fink, J. Barnes, J. McHugh, L. Figueroa and P. Kapitz were nominated.

The chair proceeded to call for a roll call vote to elect five members with the following results: B. Bortnick - 17, K. Heck - 12, S. Fink - 16, J. Barnes - 6, J. McHugh - 13, L. Figueroa - 10, P. Kapitz - 11.

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The chair declared Bortnick, Heck, Fink, McHugh and Kapitz elected to constitute the Committee on National Headquarters.

Committee on Organization and Agitation (5): R. Burns, M. Brlas, L. Figueroa, C. Turner, H. Coretz, J. Chern and A. Stokes were nominated.

The chair proceeded to call for a roll call vote to elect five members with the following results: R. Burns - 16, M. Brlas - 14, L. Figueroa - 15, C. Turner - 6, H. Coretz - 15, J. Chern - 6, A. Stokes - 13.

The chair declared Burns, Brlas, Figueroa, Coretz and Stokes elected to constitute the Committee on Organization and Agitation.

Committee on Party Press and Literature (3): M. Mahoney, C. Turner and C. Camacho were nominated.

On motion, these three members were elected to constitute the committee.

Committee on Resolutions (3): J. Chern, J. Barnes, K. Kelly and K. Boettcher were nominated.

The chair proceeded to call for a roll call vote to elect three members with the following results: J. Chern - 17, J. Barnes - 14, K. Kelly - 4, K. Boettcher - 16.

The chair declared Chern, Barnes and Boettcher elected to constitute the Committee on Resolutions.

At 3:47 p.m., a motion made and seconded to recess until 10 a.m., Monday, July 17, was not concurred in.

A motion was passed to recess until 7:30 p.m.

EVENING SESSION, SUNDAY, JULY 16, 1995

The convention was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported five members present in the audience.

Reports of Committees

Committee on National Headquarters—B. Bortnick reported progress.

Committee on Organization and Agitation—H. Coretz reported progress.

Committee on Party Press and Literature—M. Mahoney reported progress.

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Committee on Resolutions—J. Chern reported progress.

At 7:40 p.m., the convention adjourned until 1 p.m., Monday, July 17.

AFTERNOON SESSION, MONDAY, JULY 17, 1995

The convention came to order at 1:05 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported seven members present in the audience.

The minutes of Sunday's sessions were approved as read.

Reports of Committees

Committee on National Headquarters—B. Bortnick reported progress.

Committee on Organization and Agitation—R. Burns presented the following report:

Re National Secretary's Report on "General Activities"

(Note: The following constitutes a report of the Committee on Organization and Agitation.)

In the pamphlet SLP Civil Liberties Guide there is a quote from a Supreme Court decision: "Pamphlets have proved the most effective instruments in the dissemination of information." That opinion must have been written years ago. The situation now is that television is the most effective instrument. Our committee was informed by Comrade Boettcher that in a small way there can be access through community television. We think this means should be explored. It would be complicated to prepare scripts for short programs, monologues, dialogues or round-table discussions, but the success of talk-show radio and talk television should be an example for us.

Another more modern means of communication is the Internet. We think that the Party should make arrangements with those members who have computers and access to the Internet or to other computer facilities so that this method can be used. We know that this activity contains some potential problems because there are members who have ideas which do not correctly reflect the Party's program. For example, a member once informed the author of this report that something had to be done to slow immigration. This

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lack of understanding on the part of one comrade on one issue might be solved by requiring that two comrades (or more) work together discussing or analyzing answers which would be entered into the computer. In any case, we are desperate people in a desperate situation, and, even if only as a temporary experiment (perhaps for a year) we should allow our members access to the Internet, keep records of conversations and then report to the national office.

It seems to us that the scatter-gun approach of distributing leaflets door-to-door to people who mostly aren't particularly interested in them has, to a good extent, lost its value as a method of propagandizing. We think that more emphasis should be placed on work in flea markets, county fairs or other public areas where people who are interested can be attracted to our program. Another advantage of this type of arrangement is that there is the opportunity to speak one-on-one with those who might be interested.

The work of Comrade Sid Fink should be a worthwhile example for us.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] ROBERT P. BURNS, MARY P. BRLAS,

LUIS FIGUEROA, ALBERT F. STOKES

Committee on Organization and Agitation

H. CORETZ dissenting.

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

The chairperson surrendered the gavel to Vice Chairperson A. Stokes to participate in the debate.

The report was referred back to the committee for completion.

K. Boettcher resumed the chair.

Committee on Party Press and Literature—M. Mahoney presented the following report:

Your committee has thoughtfully and carefully reviewed this section of the National Secretary's report and recommends adoption. We gratefully commend the work done by the National Secretary and the national headquarters staff in their preparation of the leaflets and brochures noted in the report and for the continued efforts in renewing and maintaining publication of *The People* under extremely diffi-

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cult conditions during the interim since the last convention in 1993.

This committee concurs with the National Secretary's statement that new ads promoting *The People* that have been prepared should be placed in the appropriate classified sections of the various publications chosen by the national office as soon as possible because these ads have proven to be a most effective means of obtaining new subscriptions. This action is contingent upon the actions taken by the Committees on National Headquarters and Organization and Agitation.

This committee regrets the exhaustion of the supply of the brochure, "Socialist Labor Party: Position & Program," but is pleased to note that the brochure entitled, "The Socialist Program, What It Is and How It Developed," is an excellent substitute because it contains an illustration of the Socialist Industrial Union structure with a brief history of its discovery by Daniel De Leon, as well as a statement of its tactics and its goal. ~~Therefore, this committee recommends that it be adopted as a permanent replacement for the "Socialist Labor Party: Position & Program," brochure.~~ Further, as time permits and resources become available, the committee recommends that "stock" leaflets be revised, updated, printed and replenished as needed.

We again commend the National Secretary and the national headquarters staff for the improved appearance of the *Socialist Studies* booklets and pamphlets that were reissued in 1994. This committee wishes to emphasize the heroic efforts made in this field in spite of the mounting difficulties and pressures under which these comrades work on a daily basis. The suggestions made by the National Secretary's report to stretch the Party's "printing dollar" and add more new titles to the New York Labor News catalogue should be acted upon as quickly as the staff and resources allow. Efforts to add the Bookland EAN bar code for electronic scanning to facilitate placement of our publications in independent bookstores is considered a "must" for publication in the electronic age and we recommend its implementation as quickly as is possible.

This committee understands the great need for work to begin on the translation into Spanish and publication of

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some of the Party's leaflets and basic De Leon works in order to enhance its ability to reach Hispanic workers with the SLP message. To begin this work a mechanism must be in place; consisting of a committee of able Spanish-speaking Party members, responsible to the NEC and the national office, to do the translations and provide a means for the national office to correspond with Hispanic workers. We recommend that the national office, once again, send letters of inquiry to the membership in an attempt to find additional Spanish-speaking members willing to serve on such a committee so that such mechanisms may be set up along the same lines of previous SLP foreign-language Party committees. Once again, we wish to emphasize that this recommendation is contingent upon the actions taken by the Committees on National Headquarters and Organization and Agitation, and recommend its implementation only if it does not add significantly to the burdens already carried by the national office staff.

We cannot presume to add significantly to what previous conventions have said regarding the important and continuing efforts on the works of Daniel De Leon. We wish, however, to reiterate our support and gratitude to our National Secretary for the work he has done in this regard. The completion of the De Leon legacy is considered a "key function" and should be given a first-place position in "things that must be completed," not only for the Socialist Labor Party, its members and supporters; but as a beacon for the working class.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] MICHAEL R. MAHONEY, Chair
CHARLES TURNER, CHRIS CAMACHO
Committee on Party Press & Literature

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment was passed to strike the second sentence in the third paragraph. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

At 1:45 p.m., a 10-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 1:52 p.m.

Committee on Resolutions—

J. Chern presented the following report:

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Re Resolution on SLP Emblem

The committee recommends rejection of this resolution for the following reasons:

A) The arm and hammer is already the Party's emblem, and is already recognized by thousands, if not tens of thousands, of workers—thanks to the Party's long history of socialist educational and agitational activities.

B) There is nothing to prevent any section or group of SLP members from emblazoning an arm and hammer anywhere on a red flag should they see fit to do so.

C) Establishing such a flag as the official emblem would essentially require all sections and groups of members currently making an effort to prominently display the Party's emblems during their activities to replace their older materials with such a flag. Given the Party's present circumstances, establishing such a requirement is neither practical nor feasible.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] JEFF CHERN, Chair
KEN BOETTCHER, JAMES BARNES
Committee on Resolutions

On motion, the report was adopted.

J. Chern presented the following report:

Re Resolution on Puerto Rican Independence From Delegate Figueroa

The committee recommends rejection of this resolution for the following reasons:

A) Certain language problems make the resolution inappropriate for adoption by this body, including incomplete sentences and, perhaps most notably, its switching in and out of the first person. Any resolution adopted by a National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party of America cannot contain references to such things as “my” country or “our” land when the country and land being referred to is not America.

B) We have a replacement resolution that we feel better represents the Party's position on Puerto Rican independence.

Fraternally submitted,

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[Signed] JEFF CHERN, Chair
KEN BOETTCHER, JAMES BARNES
Committee on Resolutions

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

Mileage Committee—K. Heck presented the following report:

Your committee reports that the delegates listed below have reported that their mileage in attending the convention is as follows:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Delegates</u>	
Sacramento (1)	Albert Stokes	\$ 0
S.F. Bay Area (1)	Kenneth Boettcher	0
St. Petersburg (1)	Mary Brlas	432.20
Cook Co. (1)	Henry Coretz	0
Minneapolis (1)	Karl Heck	284.00
Akron (1)	Peter Kapitz	278.60
Cleveland (1)	Robert Burns	300.00
Portland (1)	Sid Fink	121.20
Philadelphia (1)	Luis Figueroa	374.00
Seattle (1)	Charles Turner	112.00
Milwaukee (1)	Michael Mahoney	324.20
Nat'l Mbrs-at-Lge (6)	James Barnes	733.00
	Bernard Bortnick	0
	Chris Camacho	477.00
	Jeff Chern	484.00
	Kenneth Kelly	104.00
	James McHugh	527.00
Nat'l Sec'y	Robert Bills	0

In keeping with this report, your committee recommends that the delegates be paid the amounts due them, the total being: \$4,551.20.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] KARL H. HECK, GENEVIEVE GUNDERSON
Mileage Committee

On motion, the report was adopted.

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New Business

M. Brlas presented the following resolution:

Resolution on “In Memoriam” Tributes in *The People*

The most touching and sensitive thing in our lives is the death of our loved ones. In that tender moment we need to hear only praises about the departed. *The People*, our paper that we so love and support, used to honor our departed comrades, and both members and sympathizers were informed and in their memory many contributed to *The People* instead of sending flowers. I know many, many members who have sentimentally kept the issues wherein their dear ones were honored.

For some time now we have not honored all our departed comrades any more in *The People*, and although their names are now recorded in the *SLP Newsletter* only members are able to see it. Our close sympathizers are denied such sentimental information and the bereaved ones whose beloved ones have been devoted SLP members have been angered by this neglect, some having left the organization because of their hurt.

There have been cases where *The People* has carried an “In Memoriam” for some comrades and even printed their photographs, and that poses the question: Have we in the Socialist Labor Party created an elite class which alone deserves widespread recognition?

In the interest of equality for all members, therefore be it

Resolved, That the “In Memoriam” be applicable without discrimination for all members and deserving sympathizers and their devoted work in behalf of the Party be duly recognized.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] MARY P. BRLAS

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the resolution.

On motion, the resolution was referred to the Committee on Resolutions.

At 2:15 p.m., a motion was passed to adjourn until 7 p.m.

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EVENING SESSION, MONDAY, JULY 17, 1995

The convention was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported six members present in the audience.

Reports of Committees

Committee on National Headquarters—B. Bortnick reported progress.

Committee on Organization and Agitation—H. Coretz presented the following report:

Re National Secretary's Report on "State of Organization"

Your committee has carefully reviewed the National Secretary's report on "State of Organization" and recommends its adoption. This report brings your committee to the following conclusions and recommendations:

The Socialist Labor Party is facing a dangerous and continuing decline in membership, funds and activity. Our human and financial infrastructures are at the point where they will not support the quality of agitation and education associated with our past efforts on behalf of the working class.

The reality of our situation demands that each and every member must immediately resolve to increase every level of organizational will and financial activity. To do less will put our Party, along with *The People* at a critical point.

The national office must have prompt and accurate information from the field in order to aid in organizational growth. Continued efforts must be made to recruit additional workers for the national office and editorial staff in order to alleviate the labor shortage and reduce the pressure on the national office staff.

Sections without a quorum for section meetings should attempt to experiment with alternative times, dates and places in order to comply with constitutional demands.

Sections and individuals must be introspective in regard to Party activity and support. They must be self-critical and experiment with a variety of both tried-and-true as well as

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with creative and innovative new techniques of agitational activity.

Our immediate goals are: new literature, new members, more money, publicity, and increased membership as well as increased section activity.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] HENRY CORETZ, Chair

MARY P. BRLAS, ROBERT P. BURNS, LUIS FIGUEROA,
ALBERT F. STOKES

Committee on Organization and Agitation

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

R. Burns presented the following report:

Re National Secretary's Report on "General Activities"

Your committee has carefully reviewed the National Secretary's report on "General Activities" and recommends its adoption. This report brings your committee to the following conclusions and recommendations:

There are many facets to our educational and agitational activities. These activities include: various kinds of literature dissemination, literature production, public programs ranging from information and educational contacts, lectures and organized discussion meetings. All of our activities are dangerously on the downgrade and an immediate reversal of this diminished activity is crucial to staving off impending disaster.

In 1992, the NEC Campaign Committee described that election year as "a time of political turbulence in the United States, of massive unemployment, of widespread apathy and distrust towards capitalist politicians and politics. It is a time that offers a unique opportunity for the Party to acquaint millions of our working class with the SLP alternative." This committee believes that the upcoming election year provides a similar opportunity, an opportunity to renew our Campaign for Socialism as a rallying point for increased membership activity. This Campaign for Socialism will need: relevant literature from the national office; appropriate time planning for literature distribution on the street, door to door, and at public gatherings at the local level; realistic and

demanding goal setting at all levels; immediate followup and evaluation at all levels; personal dedication and cooperation; planning for time-honored activities such as leaflet distribution, study classes, lectures and personal contacts. The campaign efforts should be organized around a clarion call for the workers of America to awake to the realization that they, and they alone, constitute the hope of the nation for a sane, safe and affluent America that can and will set the example for the rest of the workers of the world.

The committee understands the importance of leaflet and newspaper distribution. Nevertheless, we strongly feel that emphasis should also be placed on efforts to reach workers through the use of literature tables in flea markets, county fairs or other public areas where workers who might be interested can be attracted to our literature. The work of Comrade Sid Fink is a good example of this kind of activity. Section San Francisco Bay Area has also done excellent work in making copies of *The People* available to workers in libraries, bookstores, hotels, food stores, coffee shops and colleges.

Our committee feels that we should try to use community cable television as a way to reach workers. It would be complicated to prepare scripts for short programs, monologues, dialogues or round-table discussions but the success of talk-show radio and talk television should be an example for us. In the past, members have participated in radio and TV talk shows and in writing letters to the editor, etc. We heartily encourage members and sections to continue all these activities and constantly avail themselves of every opportunity to spread the SLP's message.

Another means of communication is the Internet. We think that the Party should make arrangements with those members who have computers and access to the Internet or to other computer facilities so that this method can be used. We know that this activity might contain some potential problems, but the problems could be solved by requiring that two comrades (or more) work together discussing or analyzing answers which would be entered into the computer. In any case, we are in a desperate situation, and, even if only as a temporary experiment (perhaps for a year), we should allow our members to explore the possibilities of the Internet,

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keep records of conversations and then report to the national office.

It is apparent that despite the problems encountered by the sections, the lack of sufficient staff in the national office and apathy from some of the members, that the sections were able to follow most of the instructions of the national headquarters in regard to the distribution of SLP material. We commend our National Secretary for his appreciation of the work done by members, sympathizers and sections and for his most needed encouragement during these depressing times. We are especially gratified by the efforts made by some of our sympathizers in our agitation and other activities. We agree with our National Secretary that this kind of participation by sympathizers is very valuable and should be encouraged by all the sections. In this regard, we urge every delegate to this convention to return home and place emphasis on this idea. Furthermore, if members of the Party can double their efforts and thereby set a good example for sympathizers to follow, our activities can increase and help to bring the Party closer to increasing our membership and building the sections.

Finally, to paraphrase William Lloyd Garrison, we of the SLP affirm that, "We are in earnest, we will not equivocate, we will not excuse, we will not retreat and we will be heard!"

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] HENRY CORETZ, Chair

MARY P. BRLAS, ROBERT P. BURNS, LUIS FIGUEROA,
ALBERT F. STOKES

Committee on Organization and Agitation

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

Committee on Party Press and Literature—M. Mahoney presented the following report:

Your committee has thoughtfully and carefully reviewed this section of the National Secretary's report and recommends adoption. We gratefully commend the work done by the National Secretary and the national headquarters staff in their preparation of the leaflets and brochures noted in the report and for the continued efforts in renewing and

maintaining publication of *The People* under extremely difficult conditions during the interim since the last convention in 1993.

This committee regrets the depletion of the supply of the brochure, "Socialist Labor Party: Position & Program," but is pleased to note that the brochure entitled, "The Socialist Program, What It Is and How It Developed," is an excellent substitute because it contains an illustration of the Socialist Industrial Union structure with a brief history of its discovery by Daniel De Leon, as well as a statement of its tactics and its goal. Further, as time permits and resources become available, the committee recommends that "stock" leaflets be revised, updated, printed and replenished as needed.

We again commend the National Secretary and the national headquarters staff for the improved appearance of the *Socialist Studies* booklets and pamphlets that were reissued in 1994. This committee wishes to emphasize the heroic efforts made in this field in spite of the mounting difficulties and pressures under which these comrades work on a daily basis. The National Secretary's efforts to stretch the Party's "printing dollar" and add more new titles and more variety to the New York Labor News catalogue are to be commended. Adding the Bookland EAN bar code for electronic scanning to facilitate placement of our publications in independent bookstores is considered a "must" for publication in the electronic age and we recommend its implementation as quickly as is possible.

This committee understands the great need for work to begin on the translation into Spanish and publication of some of the Party's leaflets and basic De Leon works in order to enhance its ability to reach Hispanic workers with the SLP message. To begin this work a mechanism must be in place; consisting of a committee of able Spanish-speaking Party members, responsible to the NEC and the national office, to do the translations and provide a means for the national office to correspond with Hispanic workers. We recommend that the national office, once again, send letters of inquiry to the membership in an attempt to find Spanish-speaking members willing to serve on such a committee so that such mechanisms may be set up along the same lines of previous SLP foreign-language Party committees. Once

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again, we wish to emphasize that this recommendation is contingent upon the actions taken by the Committees on National Headquarters and Organization and Agitation.

We cannot presume to add significantly to what previous conventions have said regarding the important and continuing efforts on the works of Daniel De Leon. We wish, however, to reiterate our support and gratitude to our National Secretary for the work he has done in this regard. The completion of the De Leon legacy is a vital component of working-class history and must be given a first-place position in “things that must be completed,” not only for the Socialist Labor Party, its members and supporters, but as a beacon for the working class.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] MICHAEL R. MAHONEY, Chair
CHARLES TURNER, CHRIS CAMACHO
Committee on Party Press & Literature

On motion, the report was adopted.

Committee on Resolutions—J. Chern reported progress.

At 8:50 p.m., the convention adjourned until 10 a.m., Tuesday, July 18.

MORNING SESSION, TUESDAY, JULY 18, 1995

The convention was called to order at 10:03 a.m.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported three members and one visitor present in the audience.

The minutes of Monday’s sessions were approved as read.

Reports of Committees

The chair polled the committees to determine which were prepared to report and which needed additional time. The Resolutions Committee informed the chair that it was prepared to present two reports. The other committees reported needing additional time.

A motion was passed to proceed.

Committee on Resolutions—J. Chern presented the following report:

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Re Resolution on “In Memoriam” Tributes in *The People*

Whereas, This resolution did not provide any rationale for this convention to reverse the decisions of several past conventions on the matter of including “In Memoriam” tributes to fallen comrades in the columns of *The People*; and

Whereas, This convention therefore has no information upon which to form any new policy on this matter;

Therefore, The committee recommends rejection of this resolution.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] JEFF CHERN, Chair
KEN BOETTCHER, JAMES BARNES
Committee on Resolutions

On motion, the report was adopted.

J. Chern presented the following report:

Resolution on Puerto Rican Independence

Whereas, The committee has been charged with the responsibility of reviewing a resolution on Puerto Rican independence submitted for the convention’s consideration by Delegate Figueroa; and

Whereas, The committee has found the delegate’s resolution insufficient in certain particulars; and

Whereas, The National Executive Committee, in its 1977 Regular Session assembled, adopted a resolution on Puerto Rican independence; and

Whereas, The NEC’s resolution was submitted to and approved by a referendum; and

Whereas, that resolution constitutes the Party’s position on this question; therefore be it

Resolved, That this 42nd National Convention of the SLP adopt the following in reaffirmation of the Party’s position on Puerto Rican independence:

The Puerto Rican working class has been subject to decades of unrestrained plundering and imperialist exploitation by American capitalism. The colony has long suffered the humiliations of vassalage. Today over 85 percent of its economy is owned and controlled by U.S. banks and corporations. Aside from its continuing importance as a source of cheap

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labor power and as a market for U.S. goods, discoveries over the last two decades of copper, nickel and oil reserves valued in the billions have fortified U.S. imperialist determination to maintain a tight grip on the island.

Militarily, Puerto Rico serves U.S. capitalism as an important link in continued U.S. control over access to the Panama Canal; as a base of operations that facilitates U.S. military intervention in the Caribbean region and that intimidates other countries in the region; as a control center for naval activities and defense of the U.S. merchant marine and coastline; and as a location for military training and the testing of U.S. weaponry. U.S. military presence on the island amounts to a vast occupation force whose influence pervades Puerto Rican society.

Politically, the U.S. ruling class has sought to frustrate and dilute what it sees as the aspirations of the Puerto Rican people for self-determination with the ploy of “commonwealth” status and proposals for statehood that would merely produce a different form of U.S. capitalist control of the Puerto Rican economy and likely intensify the exploitation of an already suffering Puerto Rican working class.

The oppressive character of U.S. domination is evident in the misery and poverty of the Puerto Rican people. Mass unemployment and low wages have put a majority of the population under the official poverty line. Squalor and wretchedness reveal themselves everywhere in the country save for U.S. capitalism’s citadels of trade, tourism and militarism.

Therefore let this convention reaffirm:

(1) That the SLP gives its unqualified support to the right of the Puerto Rican people to independence, and

(2) That the common class enemy of both the American and Puerto Rican working classes is the capitalist class of the United States and of every other nation, and

(3) That the working class of the United States is urged to support the right of Puerto Ricans to national independence by opposing any attempt by the government of the United States to retard or combat their aspirations to self-determination.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] JEFF CHERN, Chair

KEN BOETTCHER, JAMES BARNES

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Committee on Resolutions

On motion, the report was adopted.

At 10:30 a.m., the convention adjourned until 1 p.m.

AFTERNOON SESSION, TUESDAY, JULY 18, 1995

The convention was called to order at 1 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

M. Brlas requested permission to leave the convention at 1:15 p.m. to return home. On motion, M. Brlas was excused.

Reports of Committees

Committee on National Headquarters—B. Bortnick presented the following report:

We have reviewed the section of the National Secretary's report on "National Headquarters," interviewed members of the staff, and deliberated upon the contents and commentary of both.

In the additional light shed upon the limitations and possibilities of effective utilization of the human resources we have available, we have concluded that we must propose a workable balance of these resources toward the goal of rebuilding the Socialist Labor Party.

The elements that must be balanced are (1) maintaining publication of *The People*, the size and frequency of publication is unknown and undetermined at this time; (2) maintaining cohesion of the sections and subdivisions of the Party, activities that require thought- and time-consuming correspondence; (3) preparation of important materials that constitute the legacy of the Socialist Labor Party that cannot be entrusted to other than competent and knowledgeable Party members. These include: screening and transfer of the Party archives to the Wisconsin State Historical Society, preparation of materials documenting the history of the Party and the works of Daniel De Leon. These are the elements that must be balanced.

However, they are in themselves impacted by two other elements: (1) the human resources available to the Party, especially at the national office level but with possible supplementary help from the field with sensitivity to the stress that current circumstances imposes upon various members;

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and (2) Party financial resources and how they are to be disbursed.

As to the former, human resources, as noted by the National Secretary, circumstances have changed at the national office and there now remains only “one-and-one-half” people to write, edit and prepare *The People* for publication assuming the National Secretary continues to shoulder interim-editor responsibilities; recognizing that some materials still come in from the field. In this connection, the convention is grateful for the efforts that have been made by these comrades but they have proved to be insufficient. They have been diminishing as some of the original sources for articles have, for various reasons, reneged on the commitments they made at the special September (1994) conference. Had this source increased or remained steady, circumstances might have been different; but even with this speculative possibility the editorial demands imposed by this material have weighed on the time of the National Secretary functioning as interim Editor. The fact is, the 60-hour workweeks that have absorbed the time of the National Secretary, and the twice-a-month Sunday workdays to meet publishing deadlines and stress imposed upon him and his family, cannot be allowed to continue.

Nor can the many hours Comrade Nathan Karp diverted from the tasks of assembling and transferring the archives to write copy for *The People* be continued. Having made a fine recovery from his recent illness, his developing good health would be threatened by the need to produce copy.

It should also be mentioned that other members of the national headquarters staff are also absorbed and diverted from other Party tasks in order to produce *The People*, or perform tasks supplementary to the National Secretary’s office while he is working on *The People*.

The fact is, the present arrangement of publishing *The People* was a gambit at best, and any permanent arrangement, it was always understood, was contingent upon the arrival of full-time Party member(s) who, or whom, could perform editorial and writing tasks.

That time is now up and other arrangements, undetermined at this time, must be made.

The other critical circumstance is that of our financial re-

sources. The remaining sums that constitute the Party reserves must be carefully husbanded. Taking a necessarily conservative view of the prospects of substantively enlarging these reserves the mathematics imparts a story of its own:

Of our reserves, 16 percent is being held in escrow, 66 percent will be absorbed in two years' annual wages and another 16 percent in publication of one year of *The People*, leaving 2 percent for other costs.

Even if these figures are marginally in error, it tells us that without substantial increases in contributions and estates we may not have the resources to publish *The People* at its current frequency.

The Party paper, *The People*, cannot be continued because of staff and financial considerations, in its present publication schedule of 22 eight-page issues per year. Several alternative schedules have been presented by and to the committee during its investigation and deliberations. They are presented below with their pros and cons:

Suspend Publication Entirely

This has the immediate effects of unburdening the national headquarters workload and financial strain. It frees the National Secretary to pursue organizational and agitational projects with the sections and the National Executive Committee (NEC). Since the Party is built on sections, the National Secretary's availability to work with them to rebuild the Party is vital and cannot be ignored. Currently, the National Secretary has advised us that publishing *The People* on its current schedule has made it impossible to attend to his primary role.

Suspending publication of *The People* would allow the National Secretary to pursue other activities mentioned in his report: assisting in the preservation of the archives, preparing an SLP history and publishing Daniel De Leon's works. Suspending publication of *The People* also frees staff to attend to other publishing responsibilities that have been neglected, e.g., new leaflets and pamphlets, to say nothing of the *SLP Newsletter*.

There are several serious disadvantages to suspending publication. *The People* has been an agitational and educational tool for many years and has introduced many working-

class people to the SLP and socialist ideas. For many Party members *The People* is the SLP, is the Party. For others, it is an affirmation of their Party's presence, their voice, as well as their hope and vision of the future. The committee is well aware that the end of *The People* would have an adverse effect on the morale of the members and the Party. Others have argued that *The People* is our continuing contact with sympathizers and an avenue of financial support. Contrariwise, the National Secretary has also warned that we will lose our Party because we are sacrificing remaining resources to service *The People*.

Continue Publication at Reduced Frequency

In general, it can be said that as the publication frequency increases, financial expenses increase and national headquarters resources available for other Party work decreases. More frequent publication also means more timely articles. Less frequent publication disallows this and lends itself to trend descriptions, theoretical and historical articles which in themselves require more research and time to prepare. Some have also argued that infrequent publication should change format from tabloid to magazine.

While members were willing to reduce frequency there was resistance to accepting a four-page issue as an alternative to the eight-page issues being published now. The four-page option could be exercised alternatively to the eight-page issue to give the staff the operational latitude they need.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The national headquarters cannot produce *The People* by itself. It doesn't have the resources. However, it has expressed a willingness to maintain publication of *The People* if sections and members-at-large:

- 1) Provide much needed assistance in producing usable copy. This means articles that have sufficient depth to make a socialist point, reflect the SLP point of view and are clear and concise.

- 2) Work to increase the circulation of *The People*.

In other words *The People* has to become our Party's paper; it cannot continue as a headquarters effort. No longer can it be a product that arrives in our mailbox; it must be, in large part, a creation of the SLP membership. More than

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this *The People*, if we are to justify its continuation for all the work and commitment it entails, must find its way into the hands of more workers. Between the national headquarters and the membership there are sufficient resources, but an insufficiency of will has been the experience.

Therefore, the committee recommends that:

1) The national headquarters maintain a publication schedule for *The People* consistent with its resources, other priorities and assistance it is receiving from the membership.

2) The sections and members-at-large recognize the gravity of the situation described here and provide the national headquarters with the support and assistance it requires:

a) Make immediate and renewed efforts to provide copy to the national headquarters. Sections have the opportunity to work on draft articles and brainstorm new article ideas at their monthly business meetings. Members-at-large, despite their isolation from other Party members, must still make a commitment to themselves in this regard.

b) Make efforts to enlarge *The People's* circulation. The Committee on Organization and Agitation has plans to present to the convention on this issue.

The decision to publish even at a reduced frequency and content can only be considered successful if the national headquarters staff is unburdened to perform other Party work, their stressful hours reduced, and *The People* is serving an agitational and educational purpose, i.e., it is reaching more workers.

If these results are not apparent then the National Secretary will call upon the NEC to develop alternatives.

In a real sense, *The People's* diminished frequency and content reflects our Party's thinned ranks as well as the national headquarters' limited staff. Rebuilding our Party has to be our first priority and the mechanism to rebuild the national headquarters staff and *The People*.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair

SID FINK, KARL HECK, PETER KAPITZ, JAMES MCHUGH

Committee on National Headquarters

On motion, the report was adopted.

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S. Fink presented the following report:

Re Party Finances

Your committee studied the National Secretary's report on "Party Finances," brief for understandable reasons, and the notation that an annual financial statement was available to the convention.

The committee conferred with Comrade Gunderson, who does the bookkeeping, and kept in mind the many relevant comments made by the National Secretary on our financial situation. We also studied the detailed financial report made by the Financial Secretary at the last convention. From all this it becomes apparent that a severe Party financial situation exists now, which if not substantially remedied, seriously threatens the national office efforts to perform its necessary work. Although, as Comrade Gunderson explained, great care is exercised on the expenditure of funds, we will be in deep trouble unless our delegates convey this picture back to the members and sympathizers, and special efforts are made to raise funds.

In this connection, it is well known that our main source of funds is derived from bequests by members and sympathizers. Whenever it can be tactfully done, possible sources should be reminded of the fact. The committee also would like the National Secretary to consider the feasibility of publishing a box ad appeal for bequests in *The People*.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair

SID FINK, KARL HECK, PETER KAPITZ, JAMES MCHUGH
Committee on National Headquarters

On motion, the report was adopted.

K. Heck presented the following report:

Re Nominations

Your committee is prepared to submit seven nominees for members to serve on the National Executive Committee for the 1995–1997 term of office.

Your committee is also prepared to make a nomination for the post of National Secretary for the 1995–1997 term of office.

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Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair
SID FINK, KARL HECK, PETER KAPITZ, JAMES MCHUGH
Committee on National Headquarters

On motion, consideration of the committee's report will be taken up under New Business.

Committee on Organization and Agitation—H. Coretz presented the following report:

Whereas, The committee has carefully reviewed and considered the section of the National Secretary's report dealing with "State of Organization"; and

Whereas, It notes from the report that sections continue to be confronted with problems that either make it difficult for them to meet their constitutional obligations or unable to carry on a consistent level of activity; and

Whereas, The number of sections, continuing a long decline, dropped by one since the last convention; and

Whereas, The number of members continued to show a net decline despite sections having added some new members and the NEC having admitted new members-at-large; and

Whereas, Having received essentially the same information from our interviews with the delegates and members of the national headquarters staff; and

Whereas, The Party's problems getting and keeping members and keeping sections—the core structure of the Party—at operational levels continue to threaten the success of its activities in the field, the funding needed and staff required to support its publications and educational and agitational activities, and thus the very existence of the Party; and

Whereas, We recognize that the resources of the membership and consequently those of the national headquarters are such that our chances to turn around these problems are increasingly limited as time wears on; and

Whereas, We agree with the sense of the section of the National Secretary's report on "State of Organization" that the overall net decline of membership, worsening condition of the sections and problems getting workers to attend SLP

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functions and participate in Party activities is something that deserves constant scrutiny and self-criticism; and

Whereas, The Party's problems seem completely interrelated, with the factors of age, limited finances, limited activities, limited staff available to the national office and so on feeding each other;

Therefore, Beyond the specific recommendations contained in the committee's report on the section of the National Secretary's report dealing with "General Activities," we recommend the following:

1) That every delegate make it a point to stress to all members in their sections, SLP groups or areas the importance of reading and discussing the National Convention report upon its receipt.

2) That every delegate likewise stress the importance of assessing the capabilities of their sections or groups—or their own capabilities as members-at-large—to uphold the highest possible levels of activity necessary to give the Party a fighting chance to survive and grow.

3) That every delegate likewise stress the importance of sections and members-at-large linking their efforts to rebuild and recruit new members as closely as possible to those of the NEC and national office and in consonance with the provisions of the Constitution, so that wasted effort is minimized and Party unity and the determination to resolve its immediate problems is maintained at the most advantageous levels.

4) That every delegate likewise stress the urgency of responding to the Party's present crisis for the sake of the working class, themselves and their children, at a time when capitalism's inherent contradictions are once again increasing the potential for its collapse and degeneration into totalitarianism, and thus the potential for working-class revolution.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] HENRY CORETZ, Chair

MARY P. BRLAS, ROBERT P. BURNS, LUIS FIGUEROA,
ALBERT F. STOKES

Committee on Organization and Agitation

On motion, the report was adopted.

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H. Coretz reported that a vacancy exists on the Committee on Organization and Agitation with the absence of M. Brlas and requested it be filled.

M. Mahoney was nominated to fill the vacancy. There being no objection, M. Mahoney was elected to the committee.

At 1:50 p.m., the convention recessed until 3:30 p.m.

SECOND AFTERNOON SESSION, TUESDAY, JULY 18, 1995

The convention was called to order at 3:30 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported three members present in the audience.

Reports of Committees

Committee on Organization and Agitation—R. Burns presented the following report:

Re National Secretary's Report on "General Activities"

Your committee has carefully reviewed this section of the National Secretary's report concerning the general activities of the Party for 1993–94. We note with trepidation that the statistics cited in the report show an overall decline in most activities, part of which may be attributed to the discontinuation of publishing of *The People* during 1994. However, it pointedly shows that the sections and members-at-large have, in all activities, been hampered due to reduced personnel through the inability to recruit new members; members quitting the ranks of the SLP; and, more sadly, through death. Therefore, this committee recommends adoption of the National Secretary's report.

The committee notes that leaflets distributed by SLP sympathizers nearly exceeded those distributed by all SLP sections combined. Because of this distressing fact the committee recommends that each section and member-at-large increase distribution by 15 percent. There may have been numerical and physical changes within the section which may appear to prevent distribution at this level, but we want to encourage members to do their utmost to accomplish this goal.

The committee also notes that the National Secretary re-

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ported that some members felt that certain cautions contained in the SLP Civil Liberties Guide hampered distribution. The committee feels that, in fact, close adherence to the guide should enable members to boost distribution and avoid legal entanglements for the SLP.

The committee understands that due to the fact that *The People* was not published for five months in 1994 about a 50 percent decrease in distribution resulted. The difference was not made up for by an increased distribution of leaflets. The committee recommends that when sections or members-at-large are informed that *The People* would not be available to them at the normally scheduled delivery dates for any given period, all attempts should be made to increase distribution of leaflets to fill the gap. We further recommend that each section and member-at-large analyze the figures in the National Secretary's report to find where they failed and where positive action can be taken.

The committee understands the importance of newspaper distribution. Nevertheless, following the National Secretary's report, we strongly feel that emphasis should also be placed in efforts to reach workers through the use of literature tables in flea markets, libraries, county fairs and/or other public areas. If the sections or members-at-large are not currently doing so, we recommend that they make a survey of their community to ascertain where they could be doing these activities and report such activities to the national office to show progress in this area.

The committee would like to commend those members who expended time and labor in removing self-serve newsstands, took responsibility for storing them, and then were able to return 74 of the 97 stands back to operation by the end of 1994.

The committee recommends that all sections investigate the possibility of installing newsstands in their cities. Assistance in this matter may be obtained through the national office.

The committee recognized that a decline in membership contributed substantially to fewer public meetings being held in 1994. Therefore the committee recommends that all sections assess their abilities to increase public meetings as quickly as manpower and resources become available. Assis-

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tance in mailing, publishing meeting notices and the like, is readily available from the national headquarters upon request by the section.

The committee commends Section Minneapolis for setting up a county fair booth and urges all sections to investigate similar possibilities in their respective areas, based on manpower and resources available.

The committee notes that contacts from individuals declined overall. The statistics showed that the bulk of inquiries came from traditional sources. The committee recommends continued use of leaflets, *The People*, alternate publications, literature table sign-up sheets and the like. Newer sources for contacts that the sections could utilize might include free cable television spots or the use of Internet.

The committee regrets that membership information packets to renewing subscribers are no longer being mailed out and we understand that it is one of the penalties being paid because of the staffing problems at the national office. The committee recommends that when the staffing situation improves that this practice will be reinstated. The mailing of membership information packets has resulted in the recruitment of many new members over the years.

The general decline in activity in 1993 and 1994 was noted by the National Secretary in his report and it compared unfavorably against the results of the Campaign for Socialism 1992. Consequently, the committee recommends to the members, the national office and the National Executive Committee that we adopt a specific theme for activities in the forthcoming 1996 national election campaign.

This committee has carefully interviewed the delegates to ascertain the sections' and members'-at-large strengths and weaknesses and have concluded that the SLP, in its present state, does have the resources and the manpower to conduct a "Campaign for Socialism 1996," similar to the one conducted in campaign year 1992. With the National Secretary's report before us, your committee makes the following recommendations for general activities and agitation:

1. That the SLP conduct a "Campaign for Socialism" during the national election year 1996, utilizing a title or slogan selected by the NEC. We further recommend that issues of *The People* contain articles utilizing this theme with the last

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three issues available prior to the November 1996 elections supporting this campaign. We call upon the national office to coordinate this campaign and to develop leaflets and other agitational materials as needed.

2. We call upon all sections to take stock of themselves and realistically evaluate their abilities and manpower availability relating to the Party's agitational efforts.

3. Sections must be urged to make realistic plans and achievable goals. This planning should start immediately at the section level and utilize month-to-month planning for the entire year. This planning should utilize leaflet distribution, *The People* distribution, lecture series, discussion groups, study classes and any innovative agitational activities that the section is capable of. The national office should be regularly informed of such plans and is called upon to assist the sections as necessary.

4. Noting that members-at-large are isolated, we encourage them to increase *The People* and leaflet distribution and related activities by a reasonable 15 percent. The members-at-large should take whatever steps they deem necessary and appropriate to lay the foundations to ultimately build sections in their area.

5. The sections and members-at-large, through their increased activities during the Campaign for Socialism 1996, should set an example to sympathizers and inspire them to seek Party membership. We call upon the national office to take advantage of this opportunity to recruit these individuals through an active campaign of letters, membership information packets, etc. All sections are called upon to actively contact all sympathizers in their "contact files" in an attempt to recruit them to become active Party members.

6. The committee encourages all delegates when they return to their sections to ask each member to assess their abilities and fitness to volunteer their services to work at the national headquarters.

In conclusion, the committee stresses that the state of the organization is reflected in how the general activities are conducted. It is imperative to solve the two problems of membership and money. All suggested activities in this report must be geared at all times to solving these problems.

Fraternally submitted,

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[Signed] HENRY CORETZ, Chair
ROBERT P. BURNS, MICHAEL MAHONEY, LUIS FIGUEROA,
ALBERT F. STOKES

Committee on Organization and Agitation

On motion, the report was adopted.

New Business

Election of NEC and National Officers

K. Heck reported that the Committee on National Headquarters, after much discussion and careful consideration, has compiled a group of seven qualified comrades' names that it would like to place in nomination for the NEC. The seven are the following: D. Bills, B. Bortnick, S. Fink, K. Heck, A. Kleist, J. McHugh and G.S. Taylor.

There being no further nominations, the chair declared nominations closed.

A motion was passed that the vote be taken by roll call.

At 4:01 p.m., a 10-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 4:15 p.m.

On motion, nominations were reopened. There were no further nominations.

The chair proceeded to call the vote to elect an NEC with the following results: D. Bills - 16, B. Bortnick - 16, S. Fink - 16, K. Heck - 16, A. Kleist - 16, J. McHugh - 16, G.S. Taylor - 16.

Accordingly, the following members were elected to the National Executive Committee for the 1995–1997 term: D. Bills, B. Bortnick, S. Fink, K. Heck, A. Kleist, J. McHugh and G.S. Taylor.

B. Bortnick placed in nomination for the office of National Secretary, Robert Bills. [Applause.]

There being no further nominations, the chair declared nominations closed.

On motion, Robert Bills was elected unanimously. [Applause.]

R. Bills addressed the convention as follows:

You do me a great honor, and I will do my best to live up to your expectations.

Conventions are difficult things, and if it seemed at times that I was too hard on you, or that I expected too much from

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you, it was only because so much depends on you. You are the SLP, and the SLP is the hope of humanity.

That is not a fair burden for such a small group of dedicated men and women. But that is the burden we have, and it is a difficult one to bear up under. What I want you to know, however, is that I expect no less of myself, and that if it ever appears to you that I have been easy on myself you must tell me so.

We are combatants in a great struggle. Now we must all return to our posts to carry that struggle on—you to yours and me to mine. And if we do our jobs well, the burden we bear now will be lighter when we gather again two years from now. It will be lighter because there will be more of us to share it.

Much has been said at this convention about *The People*, the Party and the interlocking relationship between the two. Coincidentally, my work on De Leon brought me to this only this morning, and it seems a fitting thing on which to end:

“... Only the press of the SLP is seen in the land to uphold unflinchingly and unshakable the principles of the working class to wage unsparing war upon the many-shaded foes of Labor, and to furnish the working class with the healthy information that it needs.

“*The People* has an illimitable field. It is the sole propagandist in the English tongue whose field is equal to the nation’s boundaries. Sections and members-at-large may not fail... to spread this seed-replete Evangel that has brought and that holds them together—the noblest Spartan band in the land.

“Fall to, ye... of the SLP! Ye salt of the earth, fall to!”
[Applause.]

A motion was passed that this convention extend appreciation to the National Secretary and the staff members for the additional tasks he and they have undertaken for the past two years.

A motion was passed that this convention extend appreciation and thanks to Comrade Nathan Karp for the assistance he has rendered the Party over the past year despite the illness he has undergone. [Standing ovation.]

N. Karp briefly addressed the convention. [Applause.]

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On motion, the national office was authorized to edit the minutes of these proceedings.

On motion, the minutes of Tuesday's sessions were approved as read.

On motion, the minutes as a whole were approved.

The convention extended its thanks to the recording secretary.

On motion, the 42nd National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party adjourned sine die at 4:43 p.m.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] KENNETH KELLY

Recording Secretary

[Signed] DONNA BILLS

Asst. to the Recording Secretary